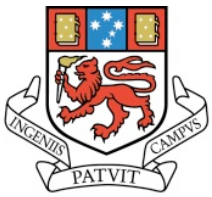

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Drawing the object – a metaphor for, and re-forming of memory

by
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Abstract

By investigating the connections between drawing, object and memory, this research project operates as an enquiry into processes of transition and transformation, and the significance of everyday objects to memory. Through practices of process-based drawing, I focus on aged domestic objects to explore relationships between materiality and our awareness of and insights into past experience. I approach the drawing and casting of objects as a metaphor for the mental processes we experience in relation to memory. The project is supported by research into theories of memory, with particular focus on the capacity of memory to shift and change over time, and how the merging of past and present relates to the creation of new realities.

The practical research has resulted in a body of work that consists of a series of photocopy drawings, rubbings and three-dimensional forms made from liquid latex, wax and tarlatan fabric. The development of tangible, delicate forms and imagery reveals alternate approaches in drawing to create modified shapes and surfaces of domestic objects. The diverse works reflect the fluctuating processes of memory, evoking new meanings from prior experiences. The works are also an intimate, personal response to the vulnerable materiality of the objects from which they originate.

For my practical research I have drawn on a number of philosophical approaches from the following sources: Edward Casey's research into the change-inducing processes of remembering in *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*; Paul Ricoeur's focus on the persistence of enduring traces in *Memory, History, Forgetting*; Henri Bergson's philosophies regarding memory as an embodied experience in *Matter and Memory;* Michael Leyton's ideas on the importance of shape to memory in *Symmetry, Causality, Mind*; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories on embodied consciousness, touch as sensory surface, and the connection between memory and the material world in *Phenomenology of Perception*. My study of this material has expanded my approach to drawing and my perception of an object's materiality and its connection to the past.

The contextual background includes selected works of three artists – Eva Hesse, Giorgio Morandi and Louise Bourgeois. The sculptural paper and latex forms of Hesse's studio works (1966–1969) express the potential of open-ended exploration within forms that appear incomplete, and their suggestive uncertainty has influenced my experimentation with ambiguity. Giorgio Morandi's intimate still life paintings and drawings, and particularly his initial treatment of studio objects, have been influential in terms of my experimentation with trace and enduring marks. The fabric works of

Louise Bourgeois (2000-2009) are a material expression of autobiographical memory and inspired my investigations of material potency in my studio work.

This research project expands on theoretical ideas that frame the ambiguous zone of the past and the present in memory. It emphasises strategies of making aligned with concepts of transformation, intimacy and the ephemeral. The partial and collapsed nature of the works, the use of disparate and yielding materials, and the capacity of the two and three-dimensional forms to be read as matter in transition demonstrates their potential as catalysts for new form and meaning. The project acknowledges the everyday object as a valuable referent for the complexities of memory and domestic items as a source for shape. The innovative application of drawing techniques undertaken within the studio research contributes to an ongoing pursuit within contemporary drawing practice to transform traditional drawing language into new art forms.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1 – Introduction and overview

> *The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of the intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect.*[1]
>
> *Marcel Proust*

In this Research Masters project I investigate connections between drawing, objects and memory. The premise of the project is to make artworks that visually express the complex states of memory, and how our memories of both the past and the present combine to create stories of our lives. This enquiry into memory is principally based on aged domestic objects; these are used to explore relationships between materiality and our insights of past experience. The methods used are largely process-led, and material forms are explored principally through processes of transition and transformation. The project is supported by research into theories of memory, particularly concepts relating to how memories shift and change over time and how the merging of past and present relates to the creation of new realities.

Old domestic objects have the capacity to retain impressions of past human interaction because many of them are made from materials vulnerable to decay over time, such as tin, wood and cardboard. As such, ordinary objects with dense material markings are universal in the way they rouse the imagination and trigger thoughts of past experiences.

Like these objects, human memory preserves impressions, imprints and traces of experience that are constantly evolving and changing through the processes of memory. Within the act of remembering, the past and the present become interconnected. This meeting or merging of past and present through the act of remembering alters our memories and brings about new perspectives on and perceptions of our actual lived experience. Ambiguity develops through the contact of past and present, and notions such as virtual and actual representation, and of absence and presence, add to this feeling of ambiguity within memory.

The philosopher Edward Casey has suggested that in memory's "action of uncovering the past … we regain the past as different each time. Or, more exactly, we regain it as different in its very

[1] Proust, M. 1913, Vol. 1, 'Swann's Way' in *Remembrance of Things Past,* translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and revised by T. Kilmartin, ed. 1981, 3 vols, Random House, Inc. New York, pp.47–48

sameness".[2] Casey's thoughts on memory, how memories shift and change over time, contextualises the practical work undertaken in this research project. I have explored ideas of memory and experience through use of a few select source objects. These objects have been transformed through multiple material forms and processes such as drawing, casts and imprints. This extensive process-based enquiry was pivotal to drawing out the unique features and qualities of the objects so as to evoke the vulnerable and changing nature of our memories.

Outline of practical enquiry

The framework for initial enquiry was directed by my early experimentation with objects and the choice of objects and processes was directed by my research into the relationship between objects and memory. Items of a domestic nature were sourced mostly from recycled and second-hand goods shops and were the starting point for my research. I decided early in the process to exclude personal objects or mementos, in order to circumvent subjective associations. The use of items whose history or circumstances were unknown to me provided neutral subject matter and increased the opportunity for objective artistic exploration.

An important development occurred when I recognised that aged domestic objects – rather than contemporary items made from impervious materials like plastic, from which I had also been drawing – were marked with the patina and grooves of use that provided valuable residual textures for visual exploration. As a record of the past, these surface impressions signified lived experience and emotional resonances that added to the potency of the aged domestic objects as mediators of memory.

I identified that items made from soft tin or porous wood materials had surfaces most likely to show signs of embedded human touch. This was significant to building an understanding of materials that absorb tangible human traces, and materials vulnerable to being reshaped or transformed into new forms. The scale of objects was also important – I chose small domestic items (i.e. small relative to the size of my hand), because these invited further associations of touch and its embodied relationship to memory.

Apart from their domestic nature, materials and scale, initially the selection of objects was broad. As the work progressed it became evident that containers, mostly round or square boxes, gave the greatest scope for aesthetic and conceptual enquiry; their inside and outside surfaces when

[2] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.286

flattened pictorially as drawings referenced the two-dimensional shape of the objects. A consistent objective of the research was to keep methods simple and direct and to maintain a strong visual connection with the objects with which I was working.

Figure 1: *Studio Experiments*, 2011, objects, latex, mixed media

I chose to work primarily in drawing because it is appropriate to gradual and subtle tonal layering and for taking rubbings. The medium of drawing played a vital role in the physical and aesthetic qualities of works. Gestures and thought processes were made visible through different drawn marks, erasures and re-workings, and create tangible pieces that are an embodiment of drawings activity and transformed objects via drawing's trace. Unique features of drawn marks and incidental smudges or stains offer alternative readings in the exploration of the new images and forms, and are the material trace of my artistic intentions to create pieces that reflect experiential qualities. Research works show drawing's capacity to reveal aspects of touch and experience and to conceptually create a space for the viewer to engage in the formation of works imagery and evoke personal responses through works materiality.

Subsequently, latex casting was included as a technique for capturing minute and delicate surface details and as a primary method for creating works retaining links to the original object, as shown in Figure 1. The intricate surfaces and shapes captured through casting and drawing provided source material for further enquiry through different material and tactile resonances and concepts of vulnerability.

Various mediums – graphite, charcoal and pencil – were explored for their combined effect with other substances, and various thicknesses and weights of these mediums added tonal variation to the mark-making. The choice of a mostly monochromatic palette reflected the aged tones and hues of the second-hand objects and was also a deliberate means for foregrounding surface details and shape over colour. Beeswax and industrial materials like latex and tarlatan were used because of their fragile, lightweight and porous qualities, providing ample scope for investigation. The tangible forms made of these materials had an ambiguous collapsed and deflated appearance and could be seen as a reference to the uncertainty and distortion of our memories.

Techniques used also included wrapping and photocopying, which, like rubbing and casting, were instrumental for *lifting* textures and surface markings and capturing the shapes of objects. Together these techniques, in combination with process-led and formal enquiry, enabled me to develop a broad suite of methods with strong physical and visual meanings linked with fragility, ambiguity and ephemerality.

The significance of this project lies in the connections between our personal memories and the objects to be transformed. Despite the continual transformative processes of drawing and casting object's material and formal qualities, I discovered there remains a persistent remnant / trace of the object. Additionally, I explored shifting objects' forms between three and two dimensions, thereby reinterpreting the forms and how they are perceived.

Within my studio practice it was the recurring remnant left embedded within the material transition of each object that I found the most engaging, because it suggested new readings of the original objects. The recurring remnant became a potential catalyst for triggering personal memories and to form new meanings and experiences.

Through my exploration with drawing and sculptural techniques I also blurred the lines between two dimensionality and three dimensionality and consequently challenged the traditional way we approach both drawing and sculpture. In the process I saw how drawing mediums could enhance the surfaces of sculptural forms and provide them with tactile, delicate and sensory qualities. Various techniques of casting proved effective for shifting graphite markings from one surface to another, or merging unlike substances such as drawing inks with latex to create new materials and forms of the objects. The tonal and material variations and the different forms of two and three-dimensions broadened my understanding of the relationships between the two creative practices to develop new visual impressions of objects.

This enquiry highlights the physical processes of drawing and casting of objects that reflect the fluctuating processes of memory. It also shows everyday objects as valuable resources for artistically exploring the relationships between materiality of objects and our awareness of past experiences. The studio research carried out as part of this enquiry emphasises the relationships between the disciplines of drawing and sculpture and their combined capacity to transform objects and to create a series of visual works that evoke the complexity of our memories.

Overview of the exegesis

Chapter 1, Introduction and Overview, has touched on the main approaches used in this research project and its major themes.

Chapter 2, Theoretical Background, provides a theoretical framework for the project through a study of writings about memory. The writings that inform this chapter were appropriate for practical exploration of two areas: transformative and transitional states of memory, and the capacity of objects' residual materiality to create new types of materials and visual impressions.

Chapter 3, Artistic Context, contextualises the project through an exploration of the studio works of Eva Hesse (1966-1969), the still life paintings and drawings of Giorgio Morandi and the fabric works of sculptor Louise Bourgeois (2000-2009). My study of their works was particularly influential in the development of various methods I used for wrapping or covering objects, partial forms and enduring marks. Each of these artists have produced images and forms evocative of vulnerability and ephemerality through the use of soft materials and/or tactile surfaces. Of contextual relevance, too, was the autonomous place of drawing in the practice of each of these artists; namely, drawing played an influential role in the development of their primary practices in painting and sculpture.

Chapter 4, Methodology, explicates the methods developed and used throughout the development and finessing of this project. It is divided into five sections, with each referring to a discrete series of works that I created for the project (*Rubbing Drawings*, *Latex Forms*, *The Wardrobe*, *Light Traces and Wax Impressions/Wax Drawings*). Within each section I outline the materials and techniques of studio research used and how these connect to the conceptual framework underpinning these series of works.

Chapter 5, Conclusion, provides a discussion on the outcomes of the research project and comments on its contribution to the wider field of enquiry within the visual arts. It concludes with a discussion of potential areas of future enquiry indicated by this project.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Background

The formal and material relationships that arose through the various drawing methods used in this project led me to research concepts of memory and to test the relevance of these concepts to my practice. In this chapter I provide a theoretical framework of memory relevant to my research, particularly relating to memory's transient nature and the merging of past and present. Shape theory is outlined and notions of nostalgia and sensory experience are mentioned in connection to objects.

Re-forming of memory

French author Marcel Proust, in his early twentieth-century novel *Remembrance of Things Past*, explored ideas about the power of objects to trigger and influence memories. In the following passage the author expresses the enduring quality of material traces as long-forgotten childhood memories are reawakened when the story's narrator partakes of tea and a madeleine biscuit:

> *As soon as I recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me … immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents … and with the house the town, from morning to night in all weathers, the Square where I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine … in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.*[3]

Here, Proust gives a descriptive and fitting proposition that the past is transformed through the sensory experience of tasting a madeleine. The fact that the memories are triggered by taste highlights the embodied nature of memory and how everyday experiences are formative of memory. Proust connects a present experience to a past one that progressively unfolds different dimensions of time and space to do with the narrator's childhood home. Through recognition of familiar shapes and textures, long-term or buried memories are located and sustained as the narrator merges and extends experiences from the past into the present.

[3] Proust, M. 1913, Vol. 1, 'Swann's Way' in *Remembrance of Things Past,* translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and revised by T. Kilmartin, ed. 1981, 3 vols, Random House, Inc. New York, p.51

At the same time Proust was writing his renowned novel on memory, the French philosopher Henri Bergson was investigating the interconnection of past and present through the description of different types of memory-impressions. In his research Bergson suggested two types of memory: *pure* memory, which he described as virtual, latent and without sensation, and *actual* memory.[4] The former is a memory autonomous due to its self-contained nature, while the second, the author suggests, is pure memory transformed by being brought forward into life's presence to represent images of the past, as exemplified in the experience of Proust's narrator. Thus the concept of pure memory implies a particular repositioning from its latent containment into features of the present that are familiar and recognisable. Tactile elements of texture, shape and dimension transform latent memory into a perceived 'memory-image' so concrete that it feels real.

Thus, Bergson's definition of the memory-image is that of a mixed memory, a sharing between pure memory and "the perception in which it tends to embody itself".[5] The idea of this intermediary form of memory resonated with me in terms of the development of ambiguity and the uncertainty of images and tangible forms in practical research.

Together with those of Bergson, Edward Casey's observations on memory greatly influenced my choice of research themes, particularly his ideas on the transformative processes of remembering that restructure past experiences. Casey writes: "instead of a mechanical rehashing of what has happened in its pointillistic detail, this transformative remembering presents us with the brunt, the force or thrust, of what occurred."[6] Casey's explanation of how we experience *truth* in memory harks back to Bergson's proposition on the meaningful role of the present in making manifest an authentic and tangible interpretation of the past. Bergson extends this thought by suggesting pure memory remains "ineffectual" and "powerless" unless "it borrows life and strength from the present sensation in which it is materialised".[7]

In addition Casey makes the point that in the process of remembering we are not simply visualising or recalling the past, but creating impressions of difference and development: "the past provides the very depth of memory, yet is continually reshaped in the present … in short, *the past develops*, thanks to the delaying action of remembering."[8] (emphasis in original). Casey's description of remembering as "delaying action" suggests a gradual development in forming the past. He further

[4] Bergson, H. 1911, *Matter and Memory,* 1994, fourth edition, translated by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York, p.140
[5] Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* p.133
[6] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.283
[7] Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* p.127
[8] Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p.275

writes: “the memory-trace is revised belatedly so as to adjust either to new experience or to a new vision of experience.”[9] The contradiction between the two terms *delaying* and *action* conjured for me an image of memory evocative of both experiences – forms simultaneously evolving but suspended because of their vulnerability over time.

Similarly, Bergson proposes that the capacity of memory to reveal experiences through incomplete impressions or partial appearances is vital to memory’s existence and its recall of the past. Accordingly he argues that “the integral survival of the past has its origin, then, in the very bent of our psychical life – an unfolding of states wherein our interest prompts us to look at that which is unrolling, and not at that which is entirely unrolled”.[10] These ideas are exemplified by the fragment nature of works in the practical study that are a sign of forming processes. They also support the concept of Proust’s narrator, whose past memories continued to unfold within the present and bring to the narrator new interpretations of his past.

A further aspect of memory that is relevant to this research project is the concept of trace. Paul Ricoeur has explored the concept of enduring traces through features commonly valued within memory, such as ‘persistence’,[11] which he sees as a key to the past being recognised. He writes: “something of the original impression has to have remained for me to remember it now. If a memory returns, this is because I had lost it; but if, despite everything, I recover it and recognise it, this is because its image had survived.”[12] What I conclude from Ricoeur’s comments is that without some kind of surviving imprint or trace the past can be overlooked and the potential for its development is left incomplete.

Ricoeur also refers to dialectics of presence and absence in memory. He has explored this as problematic in representing the past.[13] To illustrate his thoughts, Ricoeur refers to Plato’s metaphor of a wax writing tablet, which the philosopher used to demonstrate how impressions and traces within memory are altered or erased due to the taxing nature of time. Ricoeur’s example reveals that memory is by nature vulnerable to change, and his ideas of trace were pivotal to my studio practice and the production of delicate forms that maintain a trace of an object through the use of sensitive, yielding materials.

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[9] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.275

[10] Bergson, H. 1911, *Matter and Memory,* 1994, fourth edition, translated by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York, p.150

[11] Ricoeur, P. 2004, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* translated by K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, paperback edition, 2006, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, p.417

[12] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* p.430

[13] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* pp.414–15

Casey has similarly explored how persistent traces within memory act as points of reference to the past. He suggests that this quality of endurance is profoundly anticipatory of our future understanding of a previous event. Casey writes: "memory moves us as surely into the realm of what shall be as it moves us back to what has been; by extracting what is indeterminately lasting from the latter. It allows the former to come to us."[14] Casey and Ricoeur proposed, thus, for meaning to be established within our memories there must be a surviving trace of past elements.

Bergson depicts memory as an abstract image that takes form through the elements of shape and surface. Bergson writes:

> *But our recollection still remains virtual; we simply prepare ourselves to receive it by adopting the appropriate attitude. Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and as its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on colour, it tends to imitate perception. But it remains attached to the past by its deepest roots, and if, when once realised, it did not retain something of its original virtuality, if, being a present state, it were not also something which stands out distinct from the present, we should never know it for a memory.*[15]

Bergson's picturing of memory through everyday features is similarly explored in the work of philosopher Gaston Bachelard, whose in-depth analysis of domestic objects as a common vernacular for describing the complexity of memory – through dialectics of open and closed, and inside and outside – also links memory to the material world.

Of particular relevance is Bachelard's focus on domestic objects such as containers or chests. He argues that the interiors of such objects provide further space for imaginative engagement, a kind of private space to inhabit metaphorically.[16] The capacity for objects to embody emotional experiences is expressed by Bachelard as an opportunity for merging the particular and the ordinary lived experience: "it is through their 'immensity' that these two kinds of space – the space of intimacy and world space – blend. When human solitude deepens, then the two immensities touch and become identical."[17] The perception that objects evoke intimate thoughts, particularly containers with their internal perimeters, highlights that we, too, are containers of ephemeral materiality and intimate spaces in which experiences – conscious or unconscious – enter and mark our surfaces of being.

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[14] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.279

[15] Bergson, H. 1911, *Matter and Memory,* 1994, fourth edition, translated by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York, p.134

[16] Bachelard, G. 1994, *The Poetics of Space,* translated by M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, p.85

[17] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* p. 203

Susan Stewart has likewise proposed that intimate experiences are retained through objects that are miniature and close to human scale. Stewart suggests that these objects fascinate us because of what they reveal – other moments, times or places – and also because they are a metaphor for the inner mind:

> *The miniature offers a world clearly limited in space but frozen and thereby both particularised and generalised in time – particularised in that the miniature concentrates upon the single instance and not upon the abstract rule, but generalised in that the instance comes to transcend, to stand for, a spectrum of other instances.*[18]

Bachelard's and Stewart's thoughts on the perceived intimacy and reflective quality of objects influenced my choice of subject matter – small-scale boxes and containers – as a source for exploring shape as well as both inside and outside surfaces. Bachelard and Stewart were also influential for me in that they provided a framework for the more imaginative and poetic potential of the research work.

Locating memory through features of shapes is also a feature of the work of shape theorist Michael Leyton, who claims that "an important means by which the mind recovers the past is shape".[19] Leyton presents the notion that physical shapes retain evidence of former experiences through recognisable asymmetrical changes. His shape theory holds that objects and their spatial features "form a basis for memory"[20] from which the past is gained. A further dimension was added to my project by Leyton's suggestion that "memory is always some physical object".[21]

The intention to use common, non-descript objects was determined by a desire to avoid sentimental nostalgia. Casey connects the pleasure we take in recollecting the past to moods of 'ruminescence',[22] describing it as "a special yield of pleasure in recalling such a memory – a pleasure that is tinged by a wistful quality".[23] Such bittersweet conflict in yearning for the past – a longing for a particular past – and a *fixed* type of memory in terms of time and place is different to my project's investigation of memory as a process of transition and transformation.

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[18] Stewart, S. 1984, *On Longing Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, p.48
[19] Leyton, M. 1992, *Symmetry, Causality, Mind*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, p.2
[20] Leyton, *Symmetry, Causality, Mind*, p.2
[21] Leyton, *Symmetry, Causality, Mind*, p.1
[22] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.47
[23] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p.47

French theorist Maurice Merleau-Ponty was interested in the nature of consciousness, and his theories on phenomenology, in particular sensory knowledge, were influential on my practical explorations. Merleau-Ponty suggests sensory knowledge as another type of surface, a way of connecting the material world and the inner self: "sensation as it is brought to use by experience … is one of our surfaces of contact with being, a structure of consciousness."[24]

Merleau-Ponty's theories place the development of the conscious experience through an encounter with worldly matter. He maintains that tactile sensation is central for acquiring knowledge as experience lived, and argues that the senses are crucial in obtaining information about shape, materiality and space. He writes: "the unity of the senses … is no longer anything but the formal expression of a fundamental contingency: the fact we are in the world."[25]

Throughout this exegesis I refer to the theoretical concerns of each of these authors in order to broaden the contextual understanding behind the series of studio works I discuss in this exegesis. The authors' philosophical insights have enriched my understanding and influenced the practical decisions I made and strategies I used for developing new forms from the surfaces and shapes of everyday domestic objects.

[24] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by C. Smith, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, p.257
[25] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.256

Chapter 3 – Artistic Context

For a contextual understanding of my project I focused on the works of three artists: the studio works of Eva Hesse (1966-1969), the still life paintings and drawings of Giorgio Morandi and the fabric works of Louise Bourgeois (2000-2009).

Studying each artist's works was significant to my project because the works exemplified the immediacy and potency of drawing to express and record ideas and their immediate environment, as well as the encounter of the inner self with objective reality. Their works challenge conventional ways of perceiving the world and explore various interpretative modes of making. My study of the diverse materials, methodologies and processes of each artist informed my project and provided fresh perspectives on the methods I used to further this research.

Eva Hesse

> *It's what's important to me – finding a quantity for myself and whatever problem I might get with it. I might find something else, answer some question, or find some new form or thought.*[26]
>
> *Eva Hesse*

Figure 2: Eva Hesse, *Studiowork*, 2010, installation view, Camden Arts Centre, London

[26] Interview with Cindy Nemser, 1970, in 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in M. Nixon (ed) 2002, *Eva Hesse October Files*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge and London p.10

Between 1966 and 1969, Hesse developed a series of small, handmade, explorative objects. In her notebooks she referred to them as 'samples'.[27] Recently there has been an academic inquiry and international touring exhibition of the objects undertaken by art critic and historian Briony Fer, who coined the title of Hesse's experimental series, *Studiowork*.[28] The title aptly captures the investigative nature of the studio and the development of forms, whose hybrid materiality reflects a contemplative quality. Hesse's studio works were highly relevant to my research, which was concerned with an intensive process-based study of materials and the creation of intimate forms.

The various materials that Hesse investigated throughout the series included an assortment of industrial and/or natural substances such as wax, fibreglass, resin, cheesecloth, newspaper, masking tape, liquid latex, papier-mâché, plaster and wire mesh. The tactile and visceral qualities of these materials clearly affected Hesse, so much so that the conceptual artist Mel Bochner, a personal friend of Hesse's, described her work as having "the smell of the studio about it".[29]

My interest in Hesse's studio work lay in the interrelationships between the works and her artmaking processes, in how shapes and material elements correlate to form links that are repeated and continue throughout the series but which lead to many variable forms. The relevance of the series to my research also lay in how these intimate forms link conceptually and materially to drawing. Drawing was an ongoing practice throughout Hesse's career, and there are a number of academic references to her sculptural pieces as 'three-dimensional working drawings' or diagrammatic sketches for ideas.[30]

Hesse sought connections between art forms and disciplines, recognising the potential for drawing elements to be transferred and interpreted within three dimensions.[31] The art critic Catherine de Zegher referred to the central positioning of drawing within Hesse's practice as follows:

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[27] Fer, B. 2006, 'Sculpture as sample', in C. De Zegher (ed) 2006, *Eva Hesse Drawing*, The Drawing Center, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.274

[28] In 2009–11, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, curated by Briony Fer, was first exhibited in Edinburgh at the Fruitmarket Gallery, 5 Aug – 25 Oct 2009, and continued on to London, Barcelona and Toronto. Fer, B. 2009, *Eva Hesse Studiowork,* Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, published on the occasion of the exhibition, p.19

[29] The interview was recorded in New York in 1992 at the time of the exhibition *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective* at the Yale University Art Gallery, organised by Helen A. Cooper, quoted in M. Nixon (ed) 2002, *Eva Hesse October Files*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge and London, from the chapter, 'About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner interviewed by Joan Simon', p.43

[30] Quote: "They are clearly sketches of ideas, even 'models', and can be thought of as three-dimensional working drawings" – E. Sussman, 2006, 'Works on paper/works in the paper', in C. De Zegher (ed) 2006, *Eva Hesse Drawing*, The Drawing Center, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.173

[31] Briony Fer writes: "a drawing from her notebook from 1967 shows her thinking of ways to connect wall and floor and she writes on the drawing, 'three dimensional drawing'. And if she was thinking of her sculpture as three-dimensional drawing, it is feasible that she also thought of drawing as a way of 'sculpting' a flat surface"; B. Fer, 2004, *The Infinite Line Re-making Art After Modernism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, pp.128–29

The expanded field of drawing – drawing in all its manifestations: as writing and sketching in journals, as tracing with pen and ink, as winding with wire and strips of cloth, as wrapping and binding, as tying knots, as forming webs suspended in space – became hers.[32]

Figure 3: Eva Hesse, *No title*, 1969, cheesecloth, paper tape

Figure 3 is an example of one of the later studio pieces in which Hesse foregrounded the materiality of paper and simplicity of form which stems from her drawing practice.[33] In this work there is a visible layering of numerous strips of paper, one next to the other creating a grid-like structure that gives the form its shape. The lines of paper can be thought of as functioning as rendered contour lines, loosely articulating the general character of the subject.[34] There is a clear relationship between drawing and sculpture as the paper form shifts between referencing a square shape and a cube. This shifting duality between two and three-dimensions I am exploring in my practice.

Fer claims Hesse's later paper constructs are "the shell rather than the surface for another shell to encase";[35] their carcass structures appear as remnants of something other by their fragmentary state. Similar to the way a smudge in a drawing becomes integral to the drawn composition, or incidental marks act as a memory trace of the artist's handling, the paper constructs incite imaginative potential. Fundamental to the series is the way Hesse allows for the materials to speak for themselves and to be a part of the discovery of each new surface, shape and structure.

Hesse's explorations in exposing structural underpinnings or foundational elements contradict common artistic investment in ideas of completeness or wholeness, and attitudes that place value on *finished* artworks. Her ideas on this matter greatly interested me, and were relevant to my

[32] De Zegher, C. 2006, 'Drawing as binding/bandage/bondage', in C. De Zegher (ed) 2006, *Eva Hesse Drawing*, The Drawing Center, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.93-99
[33] Hesse explains that her earlier drawings are "incredibly related to what I'm doing now" (sculptural work) – interview with Cindy Nemser, 1970, in 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in M. Nixon (ed) 2002, *Eva Hesse October Files*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, p.5
[34] My conclusions are drawn from the photographic evidence.
[35] Fer, B. 2009, *Eva Hesse Studiowork,* Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, p.133

explorations into how different meanings can be drawn out through fragment shapes rather than whole forms.

De Zegher has touched on the phenomenological aspect of Hesse's drawing practice and its transformative quality, writing:

> *For the artist, the primary medium of drawing **speaks** more through its tracing than in its trace, more through its process than as a product. This ambiguity generates an oscillation between drawing's basic concepts of immediacy and meditation, touch and gesture, the tactile and the visual. Being attributed to memory rather than to perception, at the moment of its so-called origin, drawing appears to have exceeded what subsequently passes for drawing itself.*[36] (emphasis in original)

Hesse's experiments with drawing mediums were applied to her technique of layering fluid substances, such as latex or resin, and applying them over materials like cheesecloth. These methods were exceptional to the traditional sculptural methods of carving out shapes or mould-making,[37]and imbued her artworks with intriguing topographies and yielding materiality.

Of Hesse's penchant for unusual materials Fer suggested "it could look like both heaven and hell; it could be abject or evanescent, opaque or translucent; visceral and ephemeral … not just to do with the thinness of the layers themselves, but also with the almost imperceptible layers between things; where the something and the nothing switch around in the blink of an eye."[38] Hesse's layering techniques highlight the transparent properties of the materials and the poetic alchemy of liquids as they become solid things. Both these were areas of inquiry within my practical work, especially the use of various materials, such as liquid latex.

Hesse has spoken of conceptual themes of 'interiority' and 'the interior'[39] in relationship to her work, suggesting, "they're for the inside because they are much closer to soul or introspection – to inner feelings".[40] And certainly, for me, gathered materials that Hesse bound together offer an

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[36] De Zegher, C. 2006, 'Drawing as binding/bandage/bondage', in C. De Zegher (ed) 2006, *Eva Hesse Drawing*, The Drawing Center, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.111

[37] "In the process, I'd like to be … true to whatever I use and use it in the least pretentious and most direct way", Eva Hesse, interview with Cindy Nemser, 1970, in 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in M. Nixon (ed) 2002, *Eva Hesse October Files*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge and London, p.20

[38] Fer, *Eva Hesse Studiowork*, p.150. In a discussion on her use of latex Hesse said, "life doesn't last; art doesn't last" – interview with Cindy Nemser, 1970, in 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in M. Nixon (ed) 2002, *Eva Hesse October Files*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge and London, p.18

[39] Wagner, A. 2006, 'The life of language: How Hesse named her work', in C. De Zegher (ed) 2006, *Eva Hesse Drawing*, The Drawing Center, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.321

[40] Hesse, E. interview with Cindy Nemser, 1970, in 'A Conversation with Eva Hesse' in M. Nixon (ed) 2002, *Eva Hesse October Files*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge and London, p.15

intimate refuge for private contemplation and there is an intriguing sensation in the sense of the *familiar* that lies in the ambiguity of their material softness and rounded edges. Even the most geometric of her shapes appear alluring because of their suppleness. These and others of Hesse's artworks remind me of other things, of sensory experiences or forms distant within memory. Casey describes the significance of feeling at ease in places, and with things as a question of appropriating, "of making something one's own by making it one with one's ongoing life".[41] Speaking to ideas of *in-habitation*, Casey suggested "we only inhabit that which comes bearing the familiar; and the familiar in turn entails memory in various forms".[42]

Hesse's particular binding processes were intriguing artistic methods. Wrapping, tying, folding and winding seemed to be her primary ways for negotiating the making of unusual shapes, as well as establishing a type of unity throughout the series. Her interest in undefined borders, and the effect of shapes which appear to have no right way up, strengthens her ideas of continuity and interrelationships through an absence of formal hierarchies.

Through research, and my own art practice, I have gained knowledge of how material qualities can evoke particular emotive responses. I find it compelling that the particular private, material forms of Hesse's employ the human instinct to respond to small things with emotions, and that these feelings resonate in one's experience of her works. Also of value to study was her use of disparate materials to create tangible forms that are layered in their different meanings, her processes of making two- and three-dimensional forms, and how each artwork materially/formally/conceptually informs the other.

Giorgio Morandi

> *The objects seem to be bathed in the light of memory yet they're painted with such solidity and real feeling that you can almost touch them.*[43]
>
> *Federico Fellini*

In 2009 English artist Tacita Dean was invited by the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna to capture on film Giorgio Morandi's Bologna studio, where the painter had lived and worked for most of his life. Dean produced two film works concentrating on Morandi's objects and his methodologies. The

[41] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.192
[42] Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p. 191
[43] Fellini, F. 1960, *La Dolce Vita*, cited in J. Abramowicz 2004, *Giorgio Morandi: The Art of Silence,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, Preface, xi

first is a black and white film, *Still Life* (2009), that focuses on the paper Morandi placed under his objects, drawing around their base as a method for particular placement in his still life compositions. *Day for Night* (2009), Dean's second film within the series, centres on the appearance of the actual objects.[44] The following extract gives Dean's impressions on entering Morandi's studio:

> *At a certain point, standing in the tiny studio of Giorgio Morandi … I knew I had to make a decision. His objects were everywhere, grouped on the tables and under the chairs and gathered together on the floor. They were as recognisable to me as if they had belonged in the outhouses of my own family, and aged with us into comfortable familiarity: face powder boxes, conical flasks, vases of cotton flowers, gas lamps and oil cans, pots, jars and bottles, and containers whose function we no longer recognise. Were they of his time or had he scoured the flea markets himself looking for them? We have only ever known them with dust. Giorgio Morandi was the painter who could paint dust.*[45]

Dean's poignant emphasis on objects inhabited by dust brings to light the unusual methods employed by Giorgio Morandi for homogenising objects prior to painting or drawing them. Through wrapping or covering three-dimensional surfaces with various materials, Morandi regulated an object's appearance, concealing individual marks and eliminating reflections.

The ordinary matter of household dust was only one type of modifying element used by Morandi. Other methods included enclosing an object within blank paper, or coating its surface with white or light-coloured paint. At times, Morandi laid coloured pigments into the object's interior,[46] changing its opacity from inside out as dust does naturally.

Dean's description of Morandi as "the painter who could paint dust" highlights how Morandi's initial methods not only redefined objects but established different perspectives and extended our perceptual experience of his still life works. In 1919 Mario Broglio, Morandi's first dealer, commented on the artist's unconventional and intimate treatment with his domestic collection: "he not only *chooses* his models, he *builds* them"[47] (emphasis in original)

Morandi's treatment of objects, covering particular details in order to focus on shape and surface, was a strategic method designed to reveal a new type of object for his creative vision. By reducing

[44] Dean, T. 2009, *Still Life*, a solo exhibition of fourteen films by Tacita Dean, May 2009, commissioned and produced by the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, cited 01/11/11, available at www.fondazionenicolatrussardi.com/exhibitions/still_life/Day_for_Night.html
[45] Dean, *Still Life,* cited 01/11/11, available at www.fondazionenicolatrussardi.com/exhibitions/still_life/Day_for_Night.html
[46] Abramowicz, J. 2004, *Giorgio Morandi: The Art of Silence,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.10
[47] Broglio, M. 1919, cited in Abramowicz, *Giorgio Morandi: The Art of Silence*, p.9

an object's formal qualities he showed there was the potential for new types of artistic outcomes. Morandi's method of wrapping objects and adding different textures inspired my own wrapping of objects in paper or covering their surface with liquid latex to realise new formal interpretations.

Morandi said of his artistic practice and his methods of working from life, "I believe that nothing can be more abstract, more unreal, than what we actually see".[48] Understanding how his reductive methods impacted on the visual enhancement of his still life paintings and drawings was important to my investigation into the reworking of forms that creates a different interpretation of the object.

Figure 4: Atelier Giorgio Morandi, Bologna 1989-90 image credit: Luigi Ghirri

Figure 5: Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*, 1964, oil on canvas

Figure 4 is an image of Morandi's studio objects that shows his treatment of them to modify their shapes. In the image a large brown jug and an adjacent blue container are roughly covered by light-coloured paint, the uneven coating concealing each objects most discerning features. Figure 5 is a painting by Morandi of the same three objects.[49] The tall jug is painted a similar brown tone and the blue container shape references the same combination of blue and white paint, showing Morandi's artistic intention to remain relatively truthful to painting what he sees before him. In the painting each object is simplified to a geometric form of oblong shape and a loosely described triangular figure. Reducing the objects to basic shapes in this way contributes to the sense of the work's abstraction. Art critic Karen Wilkin identifies this strategy of Morandi's, suggesting his observation of the softly wrapped, modified object is what makes his still life work more formally complex:

> *While Morandi's paintings depend on abstract relationships, he was not an abstract painter, but rather a realist wholly absorbed by his perceptions, who distilled extraordinarily rarefied*

[48] Morandi, G. cited in K. Wilkin, 1997, *Morandi*, Rizzoli International Publications, New York, p.122
[49] My observations are based on this photographic evidence only.

structures from his observations, anchoring his most extreme inventions in ordinary experience.[50]

Morandi's still life works are also highly seductive due to their surface texture and to the delicate, translucent layers of dry brushwork or creamy impasto that imbues pictorial forms with a fragility and enigmatic presence. His use of a limited tonal palette was another means by which he created a sense of uncertainty in his paintings. Slight degrees of tonal shade contribute to a blurring of edges between various forms and create a sense of indeterminacy within the different spatial aspects of his paintings. Having tight compositional arrangements that enhance the sense of interconnection between the minimal shapes was another effective factor in the optical shifting between foreground and background elements in his work. Subtle brown, grey and gentle blue tones and white hues enhance the beauty and contemplative nature of his imagery. Author Bonnie Costello makes note of the ethereal effects in Morandi's work, suggesting his use of soft colour "leav[e] behind the worldly attributes of hue and line, blurring into the canvas like memories of themselves".[51]

The balance between coarse textures and muted tones within Morandi's still life works seemingly describes the soft coverings of brown paper or the haphazard application of paint to studio objects and the velvety texture of settling dust.[52] Curator Matthew Gale makes note of a disquieting effect within Morandi's still life imagery, suggesting that "beside the pursuit of the harmonious there is also an anxiety in Morandi's work. The surfaces and the interactions of objects in the studio are felt, hesitantly."[53]

Morandi expressed that it was important his work summoned intimate feelings and private reflection: "I am essentially a painter of the kind of still-life composition that communicates a sense of tranquility and privacy, moods which I have always valued above all else."[54] Artist Janet Abramowicz brings focus to the sense of temporality and the meditative quality in Morandi's still life images, noting that each picture has "the reflective persistence of a Proust, a Monet, a Mondrian … defy[ing] traditional time and space relationships".[55]

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[50] Wilkin, K. 2007, *Giorgio Morandi: Works, Writings, Interviews*, D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers New York. p.124

[51] Costello, B. 2010, 'Morandi with and without words', *The Yale Review*, Volume 98, Issue 2, pp.100–21, article first published online: 02/03/10, p.117, cited 12/12/11, available at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com

[52] Wilkin connected the altering effects of dust that softened and veiled details of the studio object to the artist's particular tonal palette, writing "the apparently daring colour shifts between the planes of certain objects in the still lifes become absolutely literal transcriptions of the deadening, profoundly altering effects of a layer of dust on the colour and texture of horizontal surfaces". K. Wilkin, 1997, *Morandi,* Rizzoli International Publications, New York, pp.46–50

[53] Gale M. cited in S. Straine 2010, *On Drawing Dust and Doubt: The Deserts and Galaxies of Vija Celmins,* Tate Papers, Issue 14, Autumn 2010, p.8

[54] Wilkin, K. 2007, *Giorgio Morandi: Works, Writings, Interviews*, D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers New York. p.144

[55] Abramowicz, J. 2004, *Giorgio Morandi: The Art of Silence,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London. p.10

Understanding how the simplified shapes of Morandi's softly rendered forms, indistinct edges, limited detail and shapes appearing within other shapes evoke universal themes of contemplation and intimacy was constructive to my exploration with memory and my understanding of how to create forms of a similar nature.

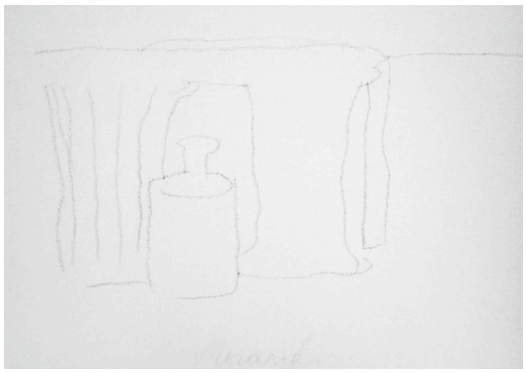

Figure 6: Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*, 1962, pencil on paper

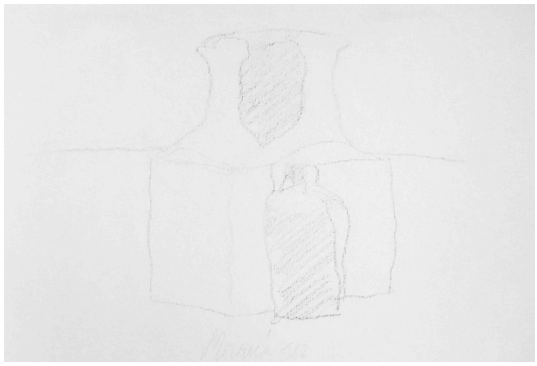

Figure 7: Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*, 1962, pencil on paper

Between 1960 and 1964 Morandi was prolific with his drawing practice, and a great number of his drawings was produced within this period.[56] Within his later drawings from this period Morandi made a concerted effort to push beyond the domestic subject matter of bottles, vases and cups. Through Morandi's use of economic line, delicate pencil marks, fragmented contours and watercolour 'bleeds' the result was that familiar shapes of objects were depicted as incomplete and pictorial forms appeared ethereal.

In this later work, Morandi used fewer objects in his compositions and his arrangements were less crowded. These features contributed to the prominence of more open pictorial spaces, enabling forms to appear weightless, fluid, and less contained than his painted figures. Morandi's focus on negative space so as to suggest other partial shapes, and his use of overlapping lines and planes to create multiple viewpoints, extended the two-dimensional image into a more imaginative spatial reading. Abramowicz describes the late drawings and watercolours of Morandi as "ghostlike, fluid forms, abstract squares or spirals that replace his previously well-defined still life elements".[57]

Curator Stephanie Straine connects the significance of domestic dust that envelops Morandi's objects to the outcome of the artworks and connects the effects of dust to the 'drier' medium of drawing. Unlike the wetness of paint, graphite pencil and charcoal by their nature evoke ephemeral

56 Morat, F.A. 2008, 'Morandi as a draughtsman', in E-G. Güse and F.A. Morat (eds) 2008, *Giorgio Morandi*, Prestel Publishing, Munich, Berlin, London, New York, p.95
57 Abramowicz, J. 2004, *Giorgio Morandi: The Art of Silence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.228

experiences. Straine expands this analogy, suggesting that the all-encompassing subtlety of dust informed Morandi's approach to his drawing practice:

> *Like graphite powder, dust can settle or be sprinkled across a surface – it is a passive agent, unlike the active thrust of linear drawing. And yet, rather than connoting neglect or simply the interminable passage of time, the dust in Morandi's studio signifies his very method, style and soft precision.*[58]

Another compelling idea uncovered during my investigation into Morandi's work was a suggestion by author Franz Armin Morat, who noted the dissolution and restructure of forms within Morandi's artwork was also reliant on the viewer's individual reading of the work:

> *… to represent the structure of the reciprocal processes of dissolution of the object [the reality of what is before him] and reconstruction of its form. The viewer experiences this interlocking, this flowing of one into the other, as one simultaneous process.*[59]

The proposal for the viewer's attempt to restore/restructure the partial forms via the formal clues left by the artist was beneficial to realising how seemingly incomplete images can make us a more involved participant in the work's meaning.

Morandi's exploration of objects broadened my perception of how a continual reworking and repeating of form can be a basis for formal developments within my artwork and for the discovery of new ideas.

Louise Bourgeois

> *The subject comes directly from the unconscious. The formal perfection is the important part and very conscious. The form has to be very strict and pure.*[60]
>
> *Louise Bourgeois*

Late in her career, the artist Louise Bourgeois developed a series of two and three-dimensional fabric works. The works are built from fragments of cloth or towelling strips that contain a strong

58 Straine, S. 2010, *On Drawing Dust and Doubt: The Deserts and Galaxies of Vija Celmins*, Tate Papers, Issue 14, Autumn 2010, p.9, available at www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/10autumn/straine.shtm, viewed 15/11/11
59 Morat, F.A. 2008, 'Morandi as a draughtsman', in E-G. Güse and F.A. Morat (eds) 2008, Giorgio Morandi, Prestel Publishing, Munich, Berlin, London, New York, p.95
60 Bourgeois, L. quote in Celant, G. 2010, *Louise Bourgeois: The Fabric Works,* Skira editore S.p.A, Milan, Italy, p.172

autobiographical resonance by which the artist explored the past through her early childhood memories.

The strength of the works lies partly in the fact they were constructed mostly from dresses her father had given her as a child, and which she had refused to wear because she despised him. Drawing on these unhappy memories, Bourgeois merged her past and the present by creating a series of soft and sensual abstract forms and distinct images embedded within a narrative base. These works are powerfully arresting in their material complexity and intense attention to the delicacy of needlework and craft.

Figure 8: Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*, 2008,
fabric and fabric collage

In 2013 a number of fabric works were exhibited at the Heide Museum of Modern Art in Victoria.[61] This exhibition gave me the opportunity to observe the works up close, and I was particularly captivated with the relief-like fabric assemblages and collages.

These fabric collage works were made from different coloured cloths of silky satins and matt cottons. Many were patterned with stripes, geometric circles and woven square strips. Each work was innovative due to the artist's tearing, stitching and cutting of the delicate cloth, and her reassembling of the pieces as other forms. The susceptible nature of cloth revealed clear traces of her rips, material folding and scissor cuts.

[61] Exhibition: *Louise Bourgeois: Late Works,* Heide Museum of Modern Art, Victoria, 4 November 2012 – 11 March 2013

Bourgeois not only employed the dynamics of collage but also the notion of the handmade to tease out unique combinations of material and formal relationships. Within a number of her collage pieces I noticed that buttons or beads had been incorporated and that unusual fabric shapes or latex balls were pinned to the work's surface and left hanging as strange material extensions. Other pieces were noticeably aged with residual marks or the faded imprint of a dressmaker's stamp. These additions bring to the works both a sense of drawing and the three-dimensional form of the original dresses.

I also observed how Bourgeois had left-irregular seams and loose threads, and that certain pieces were imprinted with human stains, enhancing the works' potency and emotive impact. The expressive quality that resulted from their tangible fragility and handcrafted nature was a reminder of the artist's emotional investment in the works. Bourgeois spoke of her ongoing and obsessive efforts to transform the past, saying "either you have embellished it, or you have torn it apart, or you have murdered it, or you have made it into a pie-in-the-sky. Whatever you did, you don't recognise it."[62] Bourgeois comment suggests her fabric assemblages became a material embodiment of her desire to destroy, manipulate or conquer her memories.

A certain number of the fabric works I saw at the exhibition were colourfully vibrant, giving them a very contemporary edge. Shapes were lyrically cut or left as unencumbered open forms and appeared to float within the space of the background. More structured forms reflected a reassuring quality, while muted tones spoke of measure and calm. Curator and art critic Germano Celant describes these works as "therapeutic drawings"[63], and I feel this comment accurately expresses my own response to the more sedate hues and uniform patterns of these works. The contrasts between contemporary and historical, lyrical and reflective, enhance the works' enigmatic quality. Bourgeois said of the contradictions within her art that "evanescence and stability are the ground of some of my feelings".[64]

A further aspect of the artwork which drew my attention was the sensuality of cloth and the manner by which individual fragments were sewn together to heighten their physicality; fabric pieces were pulled tight to form deep pockets, material was puckered around openings and crinkled edges, and elements overlapped and bellowed outwards, while some were allowed the natural tendency of cloth to sag or droop, depending on how the work was held together. The flowing lines of cloth

[62] Bourgeois, L., Rinder, L. & Helfenstein, J. 1995, *Louise Bourgeois: Drawings & Observations*, University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley and Bulfinch Press, Boston, New York, Toronto and London, pp.24–25
[63] Celant, G. 2010, *Louise Bourgeois: The Fabric Works,* Skira editore S.p.A, Milan, Italy, p.21
[64] Interview Paulo Herkenhoff with Louise Bourgeois in R. Storr, P. Herkenhoff & A. Schwartzman (eds) 2003, *Louise Bourgeois,* Phaidon Press Ltd, London, and Phaidon Press Inc, New York, p.14

seemed to match the fluid way the artist used her scissors to cut through its form, as if erasing her thoughts.

According to Celant, Bourgeois' cutting and reassembling of clothing into images that either resemble bodily parts or highly abstracted forms "recount a new reality"[65] in these works that delineates associations to both the body and the artist's unconscious. They are also like fabric skins onto which Bourgeois marks out a new superficial topography, threading both the memories of her deeper past with the present of her making. The recognition of Bourgeois' ability to unite both past and present in her artwork was influential in my project, and my use of pliable, porous materials to create new forms that are embedded with traces of the original object.

Bourgeois' ability to develop highly personal items and make them more universally accessible was also valuable to my understanding of how an archetypal form or image can evoke an individual response in the viewer. Her refashioning of personal clothing challenges her audience to explore their own thoughts of cloth and memories of garments from their past. Bourgeois was speaking of the intimate quality of fabric and its capacity to stir memory when she said, "clothing is an exercise of memory. It makes me explore the past: how did I feel when I wore that?"[66]

Figure 9: Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*, 2002, red ink and pencil on paper

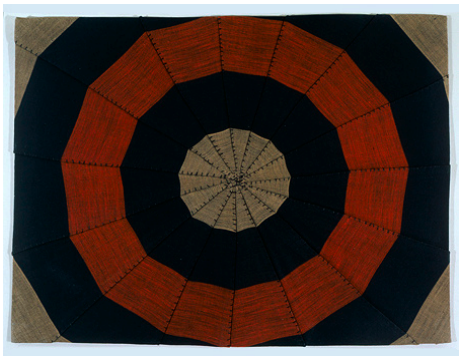

Figure 10: Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*, 2003, fabric

Drawing remained a constant source of inspiration for Bourgeois, and a compelling medium for her personal investigation of memory. Her drawings clearly express her fondness for simplicity of form and her skill in using line to represent or suggest intimate emotions and complex psychological states.

[65] Celant, *Louise Bourgeois The Fabric Works,* p.14. Celant suggested Bourgeois used fabric because it "reflects the features of her existential body, almost covering it with its secret 'stigmata' to compose an art object, a sculpture or drawing, that is the product of a liberation from fear and anxiety: a therapy".

66 Wullschlager, J., from the article 'Louise Bourgeois: The Fabric Works', *Financial Times*, 13 October 2010, cited 16/03/11, available at www.ft.com

Likewise, the function of drawing for Bourgeois was to record; drawing for her was like a diary or a cue for memory: "everything is fleeting, but your drawing will serve as a reminder; otherwise it would be forgotten."[67]

Noticeable throughout Bourgeois' drawings are visual links to embroidery, tapestry and sewing. Repeated motifs like circles or squares, houses, plants or bodily parts are evident in both her drawings and fabric pieces (such as Figures 9 and 10). Artist Deanna Petherbridge recognised the common associations between artistic disciplines in Bourgeois' work, and her obsession with building and reiterating imagery. Petherbridge refers to Bourgeois' later drawings as "three-dimensional plasticity".[68]

Time, or a sense of the artist *marking time*, is embedded in Bourgeois' drawings and fabric pieces. This can be observed within the labyrinth of woven material fragments and layers of small linear strokes she uses to create dense sculptural forms and drawings. She has commented on the consequence of time, or *durée*, in her work, noting that the making of materials into new forms has an inherent relationship to time: "what is ultimately most important about durée for me is the way it crystallizes into a shape, a form, an image, a metaphor."[69] I explore concepts of temporality in my project through methods that require time and gradual, incremental layering of materials and mediums to create more complex works.

Bourgeois said, "I travel in time. I travel in memory",[70] suggesting the mutual relationship between these states for developing new realities.

Bourgeois' exploration of autobiographical memory and the transformation of recycled material into new fabric forms that are reflective and intimate and imbued with past associations was influential on my enquiry. Also of influence were Bourgeois' methods of repeating the same images and themes to explore their meaning and different interpretations through two and three-dimensions.

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67 Kellein, T. 2006, *Louise Bourgeois: La Famille*, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln, and D.A.P, New York, p.31
68 Petherbridge, D. 2010, *The Primacy of Drawing Histories and Theories of Practice*, Yale University Press, New Haven, p.426
69 Interview Paulo Herkenhoff with Louise Bourgeois in R. Storr, P. Herkenhoff & A. Schwartzman (eds) 2003, *Louise Bourgeois,* Phaidon Press Ltd, London, and Phaidon Press Inc, New York, p.22
70 Interview Paulo Herkenhoff with Louise Bourgeois, p.22

Chapter 4 – Methodology

For this project I created five series of works: *Rubbing Drawings*, *Latex Forms*, *The Wardrobe*, *Light Traces and Wax Impressions/Wax Drawings*. This chapter describes the methods used to create these series.

In the *Rubbing Drawings* series I explored methods of wrapping and rubbing objects. I describe here my early experimentation with different objects and materials, as well as the development of the objects' forms through graphite impressions and different types of papers. Notions of touch and transformation are also explored.

Creating the *Latex Forms* series involved the techniques of casting using liquid latex and an investigation of soft surfaces and repeated shapes. Ideas of ephemerality, layering and density were explored in various methods, including exploration of the yielding nature of the latex material.

In *The Wardrobe* series I focused on a domestic wardrobe that was larger in scale to other objects in this project, thereby requiring a different approach to working. I discuss here a number of formal difficulties encountered early on in the work's progress, and describe the different formal and material relationships between material pieces of tarlatan and latex that were cast from the wardrobe. Ideas of transformation, loss and ambiguity are also explored.

Light Traces, form a series of works that make use of the photocopier. These works were created in parallel with *The Wardrobe*, and likewise draw on themes of intimacy and vulnerability. Notions of presence and absence were explored through reversing black and white tones.

Wax was explored for its sculptural and transformative potential in the series *Wax Impressions* and *Wax Drawings* and I explore the erasing of surfaces to emphasise shape and to explore notions of ephemerality.

Rubbing Drawings

> *A thing which would only exist because it was on the actual object. That's what a rubbing, of course, is.*[71]
>
> *Ian Howard*

My initial experimentation involved wrapping domestic objects with various types of paper in tandem with using diverse rubbing techniques. I used graphite blocks or pencils to gain impressions of an object's shape and the superficial imprints or incidental marks of its surface. The intention was to explore the formal relationships that develop within a drawing through the direct process of taking a rubbing of an object.

Figure 11: *Rubbings*, 2011, paper, charcoal

Figure 12: *Papier-mâché test*, 2011, tissue paper, flour, salt

Figure 13: *Papier-mâché test*, 2011, tissue paper, flour, salt

Figure 14: *Studio research*, 2011, ink, tarlatan, mixed media

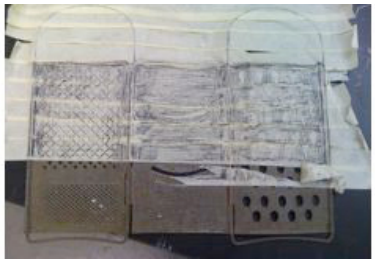

Figure 15: *Test for Traces*, 2011, masking tape, graphite

Figure 16: *Traces*, 2011, masking tape, graphite, kozo paper

I explored the surface textures and shapes of household furniture and architectural elements around me. Each of the elements spoke of memory by the residual nature of their trace. I experimented

[71] Gleeson, J. 1979, *James Gleeson Interviews: Ian Howard 4 October 1979*, cited 25/11/11, available at www.nga.gov.au/Research/Gleeson/pdf/Howard.pdf

with types of paper for different textures, weights and qualities of transparency, using charcoal to extract an object's features (see Figure 11). In an early series of drawings, entitled *Traces* (Figures 15 and 16), I made rubbings of objects using graphite on masking tape; the aim was to explore the potential of fragmentary impressions of objects to convey the fleeting and abstract nature of memory formation.

My kitchen became a place of experimental research where I invented richly textured drawing mediums by baking or freezing a mixture of ink, graphite and flour (see Figure 17). These tests were designed to investigate the transformative potential of drawing media into three-dimensional sculptural objects and the ability of substances to take on other, unexpected forms.

Figure 17: *Drawing experiment*, 2011,
plain flour, ink, graphite powder

In keeping with using substances of a domestic nature, I explored the potential of papier-mâché, using a mix of flour, salt and water to mould the spatial dimensions of an object (see Figures 12 and 13). I found that with papier-mâché I could achieve a more complete impression of the object and this I felt added another layer of intimate understanding.

From these trials a number of ideas and methods emerged that became fundamental to the development of the practical research. These were:

1. Processes of wrapping, folding or covering to limit objects to their basic shapes

2. Taking imprints and impressions through rubbing, embossing and frottage to gather or carry across surface details and shape of an object to other forms and pictorial impressions

3. Enquiry into drawing mediums and other types of yielding materials for casting and developing ideas surrounding transformed appearances (see Figure 14).

For the rubbing drawings I chose Japanese kozo paper because of its fibrous quality, which made it suitable for moulding around irregular shapes of objects while slipping less than other papers.[72] Kozo paper is also lightweight and malleable and its materiality is highly suited for capturing intricate surface details (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: *Rubbing Drawings in progress*, 2011, graphite block on kozo paper

In addition, the paper's malleable qualities meant that I could take inside and outside impressions simultaneously. This capturing of internal and external shapes gave an interesting conversion of the original three-dimensional object by creating a diagrammatical drawing of its form and surface details.

After wrapping kozo paper around the object, and tucking and folding edges into the object's difficult corners, a topographical impression of the object was made distinct through use of varying weights and thicknesses of soft graphite blocks, using a mix of 6b and 8b graphite. The soft thickness of the weightier graphite created intense dark markings and conveyed visually the density of convex shapes and curving forms of objects (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: *Untitled (rubbing)*, 2011,
graphite block on kozo paper

[72] Japanese kozo paper was consistently used as a research material throughout the project.

Instead of the blocks, graphite pencils added different qualities to the rubbings (see Figure 20). I found with finer pencils I was able to trace the shallowest of indent markings, and impressions of shape appeared more embedded in a paper's surface due to the similar tonalities of the light pencil colour and the soft cream of the paper. Pencils created a delicate and transparent tracing of the object with the gentle, silvery impressions reflecting a quieter, more considered internal space.

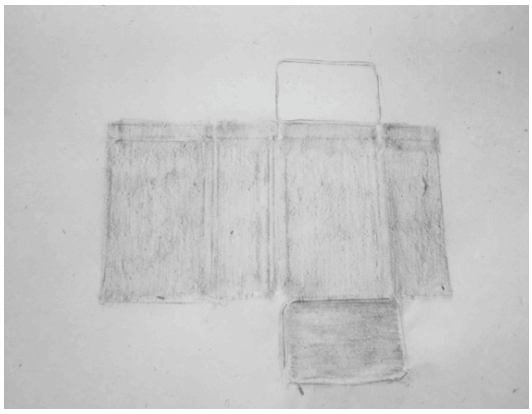

Figure 20: *Untitled (rubbing)*, 2011,
pencil on kozo paper

The effect is emotionally quite different to the dense, opaque intensities and physical nature of graphite block drawings that produced contrasting tones and more sculptural forms. However, I found that, unlike the results gained with graphite blocks, pencils were less effective in activating the paper fibres to mould shapes.

I tried further abstracting the shapes and surfaces of objects by winding and inserting paper around and into them. The manipulation of paper in this manner caused creasing, tears and small holes, which, combined with the vigorous drawing action, disfigured the paper's surface. These uncontrolled outcomes and experiential traces brought an additional layer of meaning to the abstraction, each effectively layering the work with its own quality of expression and intimacy.

The process of rubbing inferred the sense of touch that brought an innate tangibility to making the works. Deanna Petherbridge speaks about the reciprocal negotiation between the process of drawing and the image that transpires, commenting that "aspects of touch in the making of drawings, where fingers act as seeing and intelligent digits, are part of a reciprocity with the *apparent* tactility implicated in gestural line, mark and strokes"[73] (emphasis in original). Petherbridge also talks of how the experience of touch transforms drawing: "touch, embedded in lines and

73 Petherbridge, D. 2010, *The Primacy of Drawing Histories and Theories of Practice*, Yale University Press, New Haven, p.109

strokes, is one of the dynamic forces that activates the paper space into limitless or controlled depth, assists it to move forward and backward in high or low relief, enwrap objects or recede into vaporous indeterminacy."[74] I observed this in my work. The sense of touch, and the objects' elements that are typically hidden from sight, provoked my imagination and brought complexity to my artistic exploration.

Disguised by their wrapping, objects were reduced to shapes and surfaces distinguished by discrete bumps and ridges, voids and dents, and I was often surprised by what visually transpired. For example, a large, familiar functional element such as the handle of an object became rendered as a curious, reduced and abstracted shape. Thus, the process made familiar shapes unfamiliar, and the overlooked marks of everyday became prominent and distinctive. Ordinary overlooked details were mapped as unique elements through this technique.

Artist James Gleeson describes rubbing techniques as having a "contagious energy",[75] saying that "When a thing has been in contact with something it takes on something of the character of that thing … it's not a souvenir but it's something left from the contact of that paper with that object".[76] Gleeson's observation highlights the technique of rubbing as a dynamic way of realising the deeper characteristics of an object because it traces that object's discrete and tangible features.

Figure 21: *Untitled (rubbing)*, 2011, graphite block on kozo paper

In creating the work shown in Figure 21, I observed when the drawing was pinned to the studio wall it took on a new dimensionality – real depth was created by concave and convex shapes and crinkled surfaces that were a material expression of my physical bodily engagement in taking the rubbing.

74 Petherbridge, *The Primacy of Drawing Histories and Theories of Practice*, p.116
75 Gleeson, J. 1979, *James Gleeson Interviews: Ian Howard 4 October 1979*, cited 25/11/11, available at www.nga.gov.au/Research/Gleeson/pdf/Howard.pdf
76 Gleeson, *James Gleeson Interviews: Ian Howard 4 October 1979*

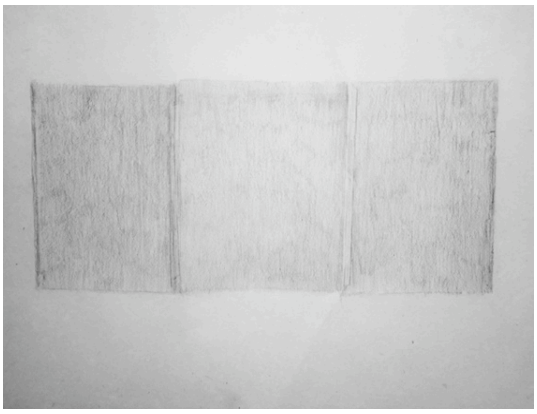

Figure 22: *Untitled (rubbing)*, 2011, pencil on kozo paper

Maurice Merleau-Ponty talks of the sensate experience of touch as a connection between the material world and one's inner self:

> *Each contact of an object with part of our objective body is, therefore, in reality a contact with the whole of the present or possible phenomenal body. That is how the constancy of a tactile object may come about through its various manifestations … The body is borne towards tactile experience by all its surfaces and all its organs simultaneously, and carries with it a certain typical structure of the tactile 'world'.*[77]

Merleau-Ponty's comments enriched my understanding of how important the experience of touch and my tactile engagement with the work was in its formation. Through these experiences I could feel the object and significant features it had that led the drawing. This realisation was to have an impact throughout the course of the project.

Artist Ian Howard draws a similar conclusion. He writes about how the technique of rubbing is a strategic method of extrapolating information from tangible experiences:

> *When I came across this technique of having something which was in the realm of purely visual experience but also absolutely concrete reality, I just couldn't help – again probably unconsciously – think that here was something that perhaps could be a vehicle for conveying reality through a convincing means.*[78]

I relate the reconstructive process of remembering to the process of rubbing. Both are a type of reconstructive means of communicating the reality of our experiences.

[77] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962, *Phenomenology of Perception,* translated by C. Smith, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, pp.369-70

[78] Gleeson, J. 1979, *James Gleeson Interviews: Ian Howard 4 October 1979*, cited 25/11/11, available at www.nga.gov.au/Research/Gleeson/pdf/Howard.pdf

The technique of rubbing proved a tangible way of outlining the delicate shape of objects and their unique residual surfaces. While retaining slight reference to their origins, the rubbing drawings were distinguished by their evocative tactile resonances and ambiguous spatial qualities. These arose through combinations of reduced and abstracted shapes, tactile marks, delicate drawing mediums, and creases, tears and indentations.

The physical experience of taking a rubbing and the translation of this through visual clues became a vital part of the works' expression, and something that interested me greatly. The results were valuable to the development of my enquiry into the connection between drawing, tactility and the capacity of memory's cognitive processes to build, from sensory triggers, new realities from the past.

Latex Forms

> *Memory means different things at different times.*[79]
>
> *Susannah Radstone*

The use of liquid latex as a primary material broadened the scope of my practical enquiry, overcoming the limitations of my earlier experiments with rubbings and papier-mâché. I was intrigued by the development of the soft convex/concave shapes within the rubbing drawings, and these organic physical shapes developed from the objects' solid forms initiated my investigation into using the sculptural and yielding medium of latex. Because of latex's fluid quality the resulting works that made up *Latex Forms* were highly flexible and the soft shapes could be arranged in many ways. These findings were evocative of how our memories evolve and take on different qualities over time.

As a casting material, liquid latex is innately flexible and is superior to papier-mâché in extrapolating fine surface markings. The latex enabled me to achieve a visual balance between the shape of the object I was casting and the surface quality I was seeking. Previously, rubbing techniques had produced uneven results through a lack of clear shape definition and a limited description of an object's details.

Latex shrinks tightly around an object, enabling it to adhere to and capture the smallest of topographical details and surface residues. Its fluidity also assisted me in casting difficult areas within complex shapes, and in combining internal and external surfaces in visually interesting ways. Just as with wrapping paper around an object to heighten particular details, the medium of latex provided a means of tracing an object intimately.

[79] Radstone, S. 2000, *Memory and Methodology*, Berg Publishing, Oxford, p.3

I felt the application of latex paralleled the drawing processes, not only in its immediacy in capturing elements of objects, but in the delicate layering of the latex, which reminded me of wash techniques like watercolour or ink – building layers slowly and waiting until each one dried before adding another.

Petherbridge's writings on the functions of drawing echo my thoughts on using liquid latex and its relationship to the drawing project:

> *The multiplicity of uses and functions of drawing – for generating new ideas and for copying from others; for stimulating the visual imagination or documenting the phenomenal world; for studying precise detail or capturing and suggesting mood and emotion; for analysing problems, codifying methods and mapping abstract concepts – takes up all the slack in drawing's complementarity with those of other media. In this sense, while painting or sculpture moves towards singularity and determination as completed public work, drawing is part of an embracing plurality, which coalesces into a continuum of meaning and practice.*[80]

Petherbridge's description of drawing as a process of connection and open-endedness was influential on how I viewed each latex piece – that is, as an openly explorative form in its meaning and its connection to other latex pieces. The potential of liquid substances like latex to create unfolding appearances enhanced these qualities.

Figure 23: *Latex Forms*, 2011, latex, mixed media

Initial experimentation with familiar domestic objects such as teapots, graters or cups was largely determined by their textural interest and quality of shape (see Figure 23). I also observed how latex

[80] Petherbridge, D. 2010, *The Primacy of Drawing Histories and Theories of Practice,* Yale University Press, New Haven, p.18

pieces were embedded with nostalgic and transformative overtones by the yellow colour of the latex, combined with the familiar domestic shapes.

I experimented with combinations of wet and dry drawing mediums such as graphite and ink and dusting the dried latex pieces with spices such as turmeric (yellow) and paprika (red). The experiments revealed that by changing the natural latex colour, the nostalgic readings of the pieces were modified. I also explored adding numerous latex layers to create variations in thickness of pieces. I observed that a light touch was required to retain a sense of delicacy in the latex layers, and noted that adding too many layers created less pliable forms. Each test produced formally distinctive tones that brought alternate readings of the work and focus to the objects' formal aspects,

Figures 24 and 25 are examples of the various scales, shapes and colours of latex pieces. Together with experiments in tonal qualities I became more selective of the objects to cast. Moving away from readily recognisable objects such as teapots and graters, to those that resulted in more neutral geometric and abstract shapes, enabled me to experiment with qualities of surface.

Figure 24: *Untitled*, 2011, latex, white ink

Figure 25: *Untitled*, 2011, latex, white ink, graphite powder

Figure 26: *Untitled*, 2011, latex, ink, graphite, tape

For instance, the piece displayed in Figure 24 consists of six coats of one part white ink with two parts latex, and its uncertain rounded shape, flexible material and white colouring add to its complexity and remove it from the more recognisable qualities of thick, yellow latex forms depicted in Figure 23.

The piece depicted in Figure 25 was made by using graphite powder to coat the surface of the latex after it was removed from the object, creating a different appearance to the box-type object it was lifted from. Its softer grey hues and vague shape gave an impression of quiet gentleness.

The immediate engagement between the object's features and the liquid latex was exemplified through transparent layers of visible brush marks that created another tactile layer. With this loose and immediate approach to application, the objects' solid shapes were rendered less structurally determinate, and instead created soft and flexible impressions. Furthermore, traces of rust or imprints from labels that became embedded through the casting process added incidental traces of colour and texture within the form.

To further transform the latex pieces I developed a technique of scoring the surface, using either a pencil or a sharp implement, to soften its rubbery texture with repeated parallel lines. These methods manipulated the latex material, disrupting the surface by crinkling material planes and softening its texture. When the latex was removed from the object, the scored, crinkled surface collapsed the form. This method further reduced the piece from the solid structure of its source, enhancing its flexible quality at the same time as the delicate etched pencil lines matched the fragile nature of the pieces.

To heighten the crumpled nature of the pieces I experimented with adding contrast. For example, in Figure 26 I attached masking tape halfway along the inside of the piece. This strengthened the shape's contour while emphasising the crumpled state of the piece's upper panel. This difference, between firm appearance and deflated appearance within the same latex form, led to an understanding of how pieces might refer to transitory states such as memory. The collapsed form was also evocative of how time within memory collapses as the past merges with the present.

Figure 27: *Untitled*, 2012, latex, ink, graphite, tape

Latex has a short material lifespan and the process of scoring, which created small tears, made the pieces more vulnerable to disintegration and heightened their ephemeral delicacy. The use of latex in this way references the vulnerable materiality of the object itself, and the tenuous nature of our memories.

The assorted methods and collected residual data from the objects provided the latex forms with distinctive qualities of diverse material thickness and weight as well as evanescence and lightness – elements that I felt were reflective of Edward Casey's ideas of memory's various qualities of density:

> *"density" … the felt compactness or solidity of what we remember … On the one hand, certain memories present themselves to us as intrinsically ephemeral – not just in the sense of being short-lived but as a diaphanous, light, porous. What we term a "passing memory," typically composed of a single image, often presents itself as having a low degree of density. Here the mnemonic presentation seems so thin, so depthless and floating, that it may even be difficult to distinguish it … On the other hand, some memories present themselves as high in density – as concentrated, heavy, solid – from the very beginning … But density is not decided by specific content alone. It can also result from the telescoping of many memories*

into a central memory whose density is itself an expression of the extreme compression that has occurred.[81]

Casey's ideas were important to my understanding of how the collapsing nature of the latex pieces and their scored surfaces enhanced the intensity of the forms. When I was scoring a latex surface I was trying to create texture and add thickness to its physical appearance. The scored, crinkled surface made the piece structurally delicate, while also adding volume and intricate detail. Additionally, the ammonia in the liquid latex imbued each piece with a slightly pungent odour, augmenting its physicality.

Figure 28: *Untitled*, 2012,
latex, ink, graphite powder

Figure 29: *Untitled*, 2012,
latex, pencil, white ink

I also observed how the scored surfaces of latex pieces made their texture skin-like, which provided them with a corporeal expression that added to their physical quality.[82] While making these works I wrote a list of associative words in response to pieces, all conveying emotive bodily qualities: *constricted, contract, breath, open, floppy, deflated, hidden, hooded, elongated, small, soft, sad, elated, movement, still, silent.* These bodily observations express the works' potential for multiple meanings.

The medium of latex was important in providing the means of connecting the inside and outside surfaces of the cast objects. When the cast is removed, the edge where interior and exterior

[81] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.80

[82] While some of the pieces are flesh-like in colour and form, which is suggestive of bodies, the significance of the latex pieces for this project relates more to the recording of surface marks in a fluid and flexible way. My concern within the project is formal and material, and these bodily aspects sit beyond the project's framework. I have made note of these findings for further investigation.

surfaces meet provides a dynamic contour edge. An expression used by the artist Bea Maddock, in relation to her work on the Tasmania coastline, *TERRA SPIRITUS … with a darker shade of pale* (1993–98), resounds with the experience of such tangible lines and edges. Her words are equally fitting to the ideas of tracing outlines within memory: "I saw immediately what the edge was. It is something that encloses, so you get that idea of circumnavigating, going around, something."[83] This connection to enclosed and bound experiences draws on memory's quality as an intimate receptacle for visualising the gathered, external lived experience.

Figure 30: *Untitled*, 2012, latex, ink

The interconnecting edge was a pivotal element for me in playing with the form of the pieces. Upside-down or inside out, many interesting shapes would unfold within the same piece (see Figure 30).

[83] *TERRA SPIRITUS … with a darker shade of pale*, 1993–98, Launceston, incised drawing, hand-ground ochre pastels, blind letterpress, on 52 sheets of paper, private collection. J. McKenzie, 2012, in *Contemporary Australian Drawing #1,* Macmillan Art Publishing, Victoria, p.126

Figure 31: *Latex Forms* (flat or bunched works), 2012, latex, mixed-media

Sequences of cast objects were selected and organised in response to their formal differences, and I explored diverse ways of hanging or laying the shapes – flat, wrapped or overlapping. For example, the arrangement of works seen in Figure 31 was trialled but discarded because the individual shapes and their physical forms were diminished.

Figure 32: *Latex Forms* (pinned works), 2012, latex, mixed-media

When I pinned the pieces to the wall I found this was more successful both in terms of form and in the way the works could be read. The suspension of the individual pieces emphasised their soft, tangible qualities and visually enhanced their individual scale, volume and material weight.

The linear display in Figure 32 reveals the repetition of form, as well as emphasising complex ways of creating folds. This serial display visually refers to the way we remember through repeated impressions, while the spaces between the pieces provide for reflection and the ability to read them

individually. The irregular spacing between the works could also refer to memory's arbitrary nature or the gaps we have with certain memories.

The introduction of the latex as a material was significant to my practical research by the nature of its sensual, cloth-like qualities and porosity. My intention was to extend the flexible shapes of the rubbing drawings and the indirect quality that the technique of rubbing recorded objects features. Latex readily absorbs surface marks in a fluid way. The solid structure of the objects was thus transformed by the latex, becoming a malleable form that could be stretched and reshaped. The use of a monochrome palette reduced the earlier nostalgic readings by creating a more neutral ground for various possible readings. The drawing mediums with their varieties of texture brought a tactile richness to the latex pieces.

The use of latex also promoted a complex layering tied in with ideas of memory, drawing and the objects. The sensual quality of the latex, which is a reminder of bodily features, brings awareness of the capacity of tactile materials to impact on our thoughts and memories. My exploration with latex puts a focus on my project's concern with ideas of transition and transformation in memory, and the vulnerability of our memories to be redefined. The resulting objects embed ideas about how memory is layered, generating new experiences and being more intense because of this.

The Wardrobe

> *The inner space of an old wardrobe is deep. A wardrobe's inner space is also **intimate space**, space that is not open to just anybody.*[84] (emphasis in original)
>
> *Gaston Bachelard*

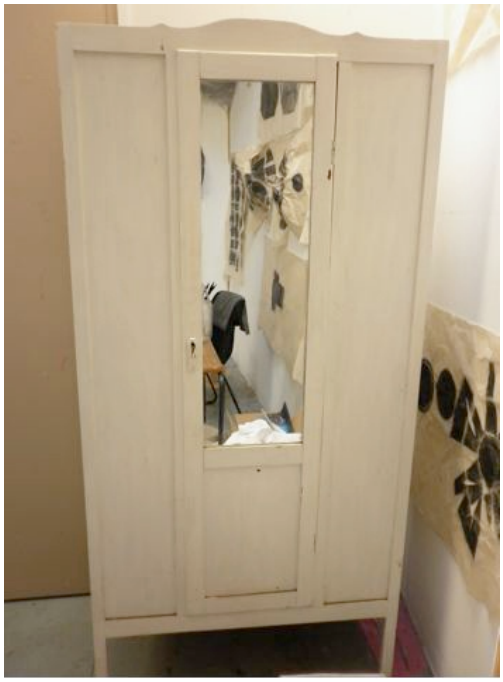

Figure 33: *Wardrobe,* (before starting), 2011, acrylic paint, wood

For the next stage of the research I focused my exploration around a small domestic wardrobe (see Figure 33). The aim was to alter, visually, its three-dimensional form by drawing with soft graphite across its surface, covering excessive details and creating a more level appearance to highlight its shape.[85] I was also interested in how the large scale of the wardrobe would evoke a different reading of the object compared to the small scale of research objects previously worked on. The introduction of a familiar piece of furniture would also be a valuable avenue for exploring the capacity of the object to embody emotional experiences.

[84] Bachelard, G. 1994, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, p.78

[85] Research into Morandi's wrapping of objects to modify their shapes influenced my decision to cover the wardrobe with graphite.

Wardrobe, (a)

In the studio I removed the wardrobe's door and cleared its interior space. It was necessary to use a mix of weights of graphite block because the wardrobe's inconsistent wood and paint surface meant the graphite adhered differently. The act of drawing on and applying graphite to the wardrobe was an intensive process that took near three months. Both time and intimacy became an embedded part of the drawing process.

Figure 34: *Wardrobe, (a),* (with graphite applied), 2011, graphite on acrylic paint and wood surface

The process of drawing was also physically demanding – I had to twist awkwardly to reach the inside walls and corners of the wardrobe, stand on a chair to cover the top of the object and sit on the studio floor to draw across its lower elements. Drawing inside the wardrobe proved the most difficult, and the struggle to do so produced quite animated, expressive marks that contrasted with the more even, incremental layering of graphite on the wardrobe's exterior. These formal differences between marks were to become more meaningful as the work continued to develop.

Although the graphite surface was successful in altering the wardrobe's appearance (see Figure 34) – producing a type of mirrored surface that vaguely reflected surrounding studio items – the wardrobe remained grounded by its solid shape and three dimensions. In an attempt to foil this I turned the

wardrobe back-to-front to display its flat dimension (see Figure 35). While aesthetically interesting in revealing the object's geometrical shape, the turned form proved ineffectual and less intimate in evoking the indeterminate nature of memory.

Figure 35: *Wardrobe, (a)*, (detail), 2011

Throughout the process I did observe, however, how the wardrobe's shadow on the studio wall diffused the object's solid structure, creating an ephemeral two-dimensional tracing corresponding with the wardrobe's atmospheric grey interior. This observation initiated the idea of using tarlatan, a porous and lightweight fabric, to cast the form of the wardrobe.

Wardrobe, (b)

Figure 36: *Wardrobe, (b)*, 2012, tarlatan fabric, graphite

Figure 36 shows the wardrobe cast in tarlatan fabric.[86] This image reveals how the technique of casting immediately opened up new possibilities for expressing a different type of translation of the object – an evocative fabric form animated by folding elements and indeterminate spatial dimensions. The tarlatan cast produced a simple, lightweight and delicate shape of soft fabric.

Casting the wardrobe in a soft material reminded me of other wrapped forms that are fragile and precious to us, such as the wrapping of the body after death in a burial cloth or the woven hair of a loved one kept in a locket, both symbols of life's preservation that endures beyond the source. The notion of wrapping the wardrobe connected the piece to the earlier process of covering small-scale studio objects in soft paper and layering them with transparent latex with the intent of emphasising their ephemeral qualities.

Before casting the wardrobe I made a number of test pieces using tarlatan of different sizes. I found that larger sections held tension in both surface and shape, whereas the many uneven joins of smaller pieces brought focus to surface only. I added fabric stiffener and clear PVA glue so that the tracing of the graphite would stick to the tarlatan in order to give some structure and shape to the new form.

To ensure the work was specific to the wardrobe, tarlatan strips were measured to fit the different-sized panels of the wardrobe and then these sections were separately glued and joined together on the wardrobe's exterior surface. Within a week the tarlatan fabric was completely dry and ready to be removed.

Figure 37: *Wardrobe, (b)*, (detail), 2012

Each of the three images in Figure 37 shows a different stage in the removal of the fabric material and the wardrobe's form transition from a solid shape into a more organic form. Lifting the piece

[86] Tarlatan fabric is connected with drawing and printing as a material for wiping excess ink from printing plates. It is also used as a stiffening material for skirts or inside collars.

intact from the wardrobe's surface involved a fine balance between tugging and gentle coaxing of the material. Certain sections had become more firmly fastened to the wardrobe, and the effort to release them is reflected in the number of surface tears and torn edges on the fabric cast. These I thought added to the delicate quality of the form. For me, the tension between the brute force required to remove the fabric material from the wardrobe and the after-effect of the difficult process is exemplified by the subsiding, worn-out appearance of the fabric.

When peeling away the cast I was visually reminded of shed skin, ephemeral casings and carapaces in nature, which are indexes for new forms emerging from an original. Described by Rosalind E. Krauss as "nature's form of casting",[87] ephemeral moulds such as a snakeskin or a cicada shell are a physical sign of transition and transformation. More than a reminder of the absent past, their material trace acts as a physical memory of the original form. These fragile exoskeletons are vitally complex in their varied meanings – acting as archaeological evidence of time passing while their material remnants provide a sign of life ongoing. In nature, ephemeral casings would once have been protective sheaths for softer internal forms, serving as the medium and interface through which the organism and the world exchange.

The metaphor of shed skin is also tied to my earlier use of latex to create moulds of objects, and to the technique of casting the wardrobe in fabric to create another type of tracing of its shape into new and distinct material form. My intention to transform the wardrobe revealed concepts of both transformation and loss, with the empty mould referring to the wardrobe's absence.

The superficial layer of graphite on the wardrobe acted as a porous barrier, and its greasy surface allowed for the fabric to become separated. Similarities between the protective sheath as a mode of communication and the open weave of the fabric material strike a chord with Edward Casey's suggestion that memory is of a porous nature, and that memory enables us to reflect on our past as well as giving us an understanding of our inhabitation with the reality of the surrounding material world. Casey writes:

> *The fact is that memory is more a colander than a container, more porous than enframing. Its final freedom of in-gathering is a freedom of letting the world in through its many subtle pores (and this in many fashions) only in order to allow us to realise how richly we already in-habit the world without.*[88] (emphasis in original)

[87] Krauss, R.E. 'X marks the spot' in Y-A. Bois & R.E. Krauss, 1997, *Formless: A User's Guide*, Zone Books, New York, p.214
[88] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.310

Casey's idea of an awareness of interrelated experiences brought about by the process of remembering aligns with my exploration of the wardrobe and the human scale of its shape. For instance, when I suspended the fabric piece from the studio wall it evoked the texture and weight of hanging clothes inside a closet. The daily ritual, physical process of adding and removing personal items from a wardrobe can be seen as a parallel to the daily cognitive functioning of memory – its constant collecting, culling and reappraisal of a lifetime's experiences, thoughts and emotions.[89]

Bachelard's metaphor of memory as a wardrobe is a testament to the object as an inspirational form for images of the mind.[90]

Figure 38: *Wardrobe, (b)*, (detail), 2012

I felt it was important to leave traces of the process in the finished piece, such as overlapping edges and excess tarlatan strips that extend beyond the silhouette of the shape. The presence of these trace elements implied a form unconfined by its boundaries and a shape openly speculative in its layered meanings. The extensions also reference the techniques and processes of forming to build a different impression of the wardrobe's structure and materiality (see Figure 38).

The fabric form's interior surface of graphite, which looked like paper, was a further reminder of the drawing process from which it originated; the slippery, soft nature of the graphite, which easily lifted off, added to the form's sense of lightness. An exciting outcome was seen in how the graphite and tarlatan culminated in the creation of the form's exterior of subtle grey tones. The effect shows the connections between the medium of drawing and the medium of casting to transform materials into a new form of sensorial and delicate qualities.

[89] Louise Bourgeois suggested "you can retell your life and remember your life by the shape, the weight, the colour, the smell of the clothes in your closet", interview Paulo Herkenhoff with Louise Bourgeois in R. Storr, P. Herkenhoff & A. Schwartzman (eds) 2003, *Louise Bourgeois,* Phaidon Press Ltd, London, and Phaidon Press Inc, New York, p.22

[90] Quote: "…memory is a wardrobe", G. Bachelard, 1994, *The Poetics of Space,* translated by M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, p.79

Wardrobe, (c)

Figure 39: *Wardrobe, (c)*, 2013, latex, graphite

To cast the inside of the wardrobe I used liquid latex. This was a deliberate strategy designed to create a visual and formal contrast to the tarlatan fabric, but the slow building of thin layers also helped to embed the wardrobe's residue into the latex. It took six weeks overall to complete the number of layers that provided the piece with an effective weight, delicacy and texture.

Due to previous studies with latex I had some foresight into the outcome, but I was unprepared for the way its large rubbery shape struggled against my attempts to fold or carry it. This sense of *aliveness* contrasted with the piece's floppy, flexible quality and its overt loss of volume (see Figure 39). Additionally the pliable materiality produced a softer, more uncertain impression of the wardrobe compared to the firmer structure and shape of the tarlatan piece.

The 'force of the formless'[91] is a term referred to by Rosalind E. Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois to describe appearances of artforms which, by their lack of clear shape and formal uncertainty, suggest an orientation towards disrupting representational imagery. I observed a similar disruption in the flexible quality of the latex piece and in the way it evoked an uncanny image of an everyday domestic object.

Recognising the capacity of soft sculpture to challenge ordinary perspectives was integral to providing a context for the latex piece, and to how the piece's flexible quality creates a vague, uncertain material memory of the familiar domestic wardrobe.

[91] Bois, Y-A & Krauss, R.E 1997, *Formless: A User's Guide*, Zone Books, New York, p.9

Figure 40: *Wardrobe, (c)*, (detail), 2013

While making this piece I was reminded of a palimpsest, an ancient manuscript made of parchment that is written over and erased multiple times, while underneath the layers of writing there are traces of the original text partially visible. The manuscript is a record of both time and process through its constant reworking; the many layers of erasure and rewriting provide its surface with a particular density. This is an analogy for the surface of our memories, on which we draw our various conclusions about our past and the present.

The concept of the palimpsest resonated with the act of drawing across the wardrobe, erasing and covering its aged surface to reveal another type of transformed object. There is also a relationship to the latex piece. Expressive graphite tracings made from my earlier struggles with applying the graphite inside the wardrobe are an embedded part of the latex surface, adding to the quality of its rough, animated topography. These graphite markings provide quite a different surface to that of the tarlatan form, in which the graphite markings are evenly distributed; they thus create a more harmonious impression.

The interior of a wardrobe is an intimate place, and a metaphor for our sense of private self. When peeling away the latex material from inside the wardrobe I felt like I was unveiling its past secrets. Its patina held memories of what was once held inside and, like shadows, traced the object's history. Creating the latex mould was a means of giving access to seeing and touching the tactile past, imbued with the wardrobe's rich details.

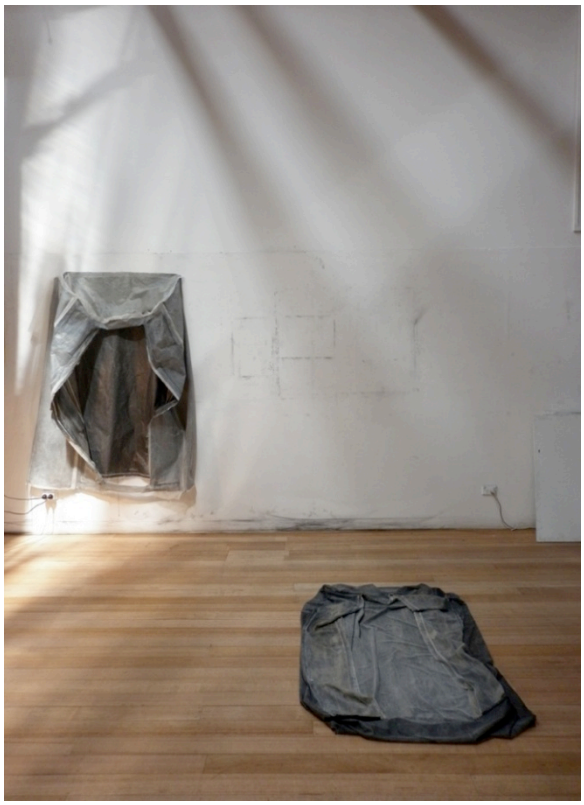

Figure 41: *Wardrobe, (b and c)*, (detail), 2013

Figure 41 shows the importance of installing the two pieces adjacent to each other so that connections can be made through their shapes and surface details. While creating a dialogue between the two pieces, the arrangement also allows for the works to be viewed as separate pieces. That the two wardrobe forms need to be pinned to the wall or supported by the floor reveals how the two pieces transcend the original orientation and structural capacity of the wardrobe. The open space between the two pieces – the space where the wardrobe would stand – also speaks of the wardrobe's absence.

The large scale of the wardrobe was effective for creating more ambitious pieces and larger surfaces (compared to the works mentioned earlier) on which overt gestures could be made evident, while the use of rubbing and wrapping were shown to be successful strategies in forming and separating shape. The introduction of fabric emphasised the wardrobe's domestic quality and references to clothing, whereas the flexible latex piece – a reflection of the fluid nature of the latex medium – evoked a more ambiguous impression and was an effective foil to the object's domesticity.

The initial covering of graphite on the wardrobe revealed a way of embedding colour, and graphite's oily surface enhanced the form's sensorial tangible quality, bringing cohesion to the series by

creating a visual link between the two strikingly different forms. Normally a medium associated with drawing, graphite proved to be adaptable to sculptural forms via the technique of casting.

The casting of the wardrobe built on my project's interplay with ideas of memory and objects. The new material forms of the wardrobe, divested of their structure/armature, referred to how our memories of the past can become ambiguous; it is as if by removing structure the certainty of an earlier memory collapses. The project's investigation of the wardrobe also shows the relationships between drawing and casting. Both methodologies were crucial to exploring the wardrobe on a deeper level, creating individual forms that presented a way of opening up a new understanding of the intimacy, associations and meanings of the object.

Light Traces

> *We cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact. They need only to be tonalised on the mode of our inner space.*[92]
>
> *Gaston Bachelard*

Figure 42: *Light Traces*, 2011–12, ink, charcoal, pencil on kozo paper

While working on the wardrobe, I explored a technique that involved photocopying some of the latex castings of the domestic objects. The process produced interesting results by distancing the objects from their domestic readings, as the photocopied images flattened the forms further towards two-dimensionality. Because the kozo paper I used was larger than A3 size, an imprint of A3

[92] Bachelard, G. 1994, *The Poetics of Space,* translated by M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, p.12

registration marks was left behind in a number of the works. I explored the potential of these incidental traces to add to the works' abstraction.

Figure 43: *Untitled*, 2011, ink, charcoal, pencil on kozo paper

Figure 44: *Untitled*, 2011, ink, charcoal, pencil on kozo paper

Figure 43 is a photocopy of a latex piece that was subsequently embellished through drawing into its surface (I have coined the term 'photo-drawings' for these images). Features such as the rounded shape, furrowed lines and flat planes extend the latex piece's formal qualities compared to the round domestic bowl from which it originated. The visual collapsing of its volume presents an alternative reading of the object, and details that have been refined through the process are more open to exploration. These results produced a similar effect to the diagrammatic representation of the rubbing drawings. They also refer to memory, which reconstructs three-dimensional experiences into a visual study of surface shape and texture.

Figure 44 shows another photo-drawing, this time of a square-ish shape with a wrinkled appearance with undulating lines created through scoring the surface of the latex piece. To stress the persistent textual and linear elements retained by the different methods of casting and photocopying, they were highlighted with white pencil or deepened through shading.

Figure 45: *Untitled*, 2012, ink,
charcoal, pencil on kozo paper

Edward Casey refers to the illuminating qualities of light as a metaphor for memory:

> *Just because memory is so massively grounded in the past, it can be of inestimable importance in the present, illuminating it with a light not otherwise available, proffering insight that cannot be acquired in any other way – insight "from within," from within our own experience-as-remembered.*[93]

Casey's metaphorical reference to light influenced my decision to experiment with reversing the black and white tones in some of the photocopy images. The technique created a compelling X-ray effect that enhanced the impression of the object and its intimate details.

Within Figure 45, the reversal of tones proved effective in developing a luminous, floating shape, the white features making the form appear transparent. Linear qualities in this work give way to a new dimension; spreading outwards like veins, they emerge as if they are a life source for the floating shape. This enlivening of the shape provided a powerful contrast to how in my earlier works pencil lines drawn on latex pieces ruptured surfaces and deflated physical structures. This discovery was an exciting shift in thinking, and led to further experimentation into the potential of mark-making with the photocopies in order to enliven the images and their meaning in relation to memory states.

I tried different ways of enhancing the image within the paper's surface. I surrounded one shape with charcoal, building on the blackness of the copier ink, to achieve a deeper, spatial dimension

[93] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.284

that heightened the sense of an emergent form. The optical transformation that occurred through these explorations brought richness to the forms that was not only evocative of states of memory, but could imply the cognitive working processes of memory that build on different impressions.

Photocopying the objects' forms was a valuable method for developing new perspectives on the objects' three-dimensional features. Author Susan Sontag has referred to photography as a means of enhancement and a way of validating information or revealing and abstracting elements from three-dimensional reality:

> *All that photography's program of realism actually implies is the belief that reality is hidden. And, being hidden, is something to be unveiled. Whatever the camera records is a disclosure – whether it is imperceptible, fleeting parts of movement, an order that natural vision is incapable of perceiving or a "heightened reality" … Just to show something, anything, in the photographic view is to show that it is hidden.*[94]

Sontag's ideas on the capacity of photography to disclose concealed features correspond with those of philosopher Walter Benjamin, who suggested the camera records elements not immediately apparent to the conscious mind but which are revealed at the time the photograph is developed.[95] Benjamin suggests that our memories operate in a similar belated fashion, where details of our prior experiences often only emerge retrospectively. Benjamin's ideas are comparable to those expressed by Edward Casey, who refers to the belated revising of memories "so as to adjust either to new experience or to a new vision of experience".[96]

94 Sontag is quoting the artist Moholy-Nagy when referring to "heightened reality". Sontag, S. 1973, *On Photography*, third edition 1978, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, pp.120–21

95 Leslie, E. 2010, 'Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin', in S. Radstone & B. Schwarz (eds) 2010, *Memory Histories, Theories, Debates*, Fordham University Press, New York, p.128

96 Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.275

Figure 46: *Light Traces*, 2012, ink, charcoal, pencil on kozo paper

My reworking of the same form – casting and then taking a photocopy of the cast – draws an analogy to retrospective memory, where each successive stage of an object's modification and the many-stepped processes unveil new propositions. The new readings of the object that emerge through the various stages of making are also an expression of the relationships between the various techniques and artistic processes that form a new reality of the object.

At this stage, a year into the making of the work, the latex pieces from which the photocopy images were drawn were rapidly disintegrating. Individual pieces had begun to shred, deteriorate and break down due to the scoring and pricking of surfaces. Although the rapidity with which pieces were crumbling was unforeseen, these effects increased my appreciation of the vulnerability of the works, suggesting the way memories become eroded and fragmented by time. The process of photocopying captured the decay of the latex pieces, functioning as a visual memory/record for the transformation of their physical traces.

Wax Impressions and *Wax Drawings*

Exploration within memory – even within a single memory – is potentially limitless.[97]

Edward Casey

Figure 47: *Untitled*, 2012, wax, graphite powder

Figure 48: *Untitled*, 2012, wax

With *Wax Impressions* and *Wax Drawings*, once again the kitchen became a place of experimental research. I made numerous batches of white and creamy yellow mixtures from various types of beeswax and paraffin. I added graphite powder and sumi ink to the wax to create mid-grey tones of varying degrees of transparency and substance. The medium of wax was explored for its capacity to record and absorb residual marks from the surface of objects and to solidify the surfaces and shapes of malleable latex pieces.

Layering hot wax onto the latex piece was a very delicate procedure. The first coat was the most difficult because the latex kept shifting under the brush. Painting the wax and drizzling its sticky consistency among the many intricate folds of the latex was also challenging, requiring time and patience.

To assist in the removal of the wax from the latex I placed the wax/latex mould into the refrigerator. This cooled the wax quickly and stiffened the latex, and the low temperature transformed these two disparate materials into a similar physical state. For a brief moment the transformation of the materials enabled me to delicately peel the two surfaces away from each other.

[97] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.205

Figure 49: *Untitled*, 2012, wax, graphite powder, ink

The method of casting with wax proved effective in giving the pieces a unique expression. The wax objects when removed appeared as fine, lumpy masses with an oily, slick surface of waxy folds that revealed the impressionable and malleable quality of the latex. The pieces also took on the imprint of the contracting and pinching of the latex as it reacted to the hot wax (see Figure 49). The wax impressions appear flesh-like, and the sensuality of waxy surfaces recall dimpled skin (see Figure 50). These findings extended on my earlier observations of bodily references within the latex pieces.

Residual imprints embedded into the wax were evident in the wax surfaces, their fine traces of blue or red stains adding touches of colour to the tonal impression. These references to the past evoke a tangible sign of transformation. This resonates with the capacity of our fluctuating memories to become solidified as both past and present impressions within our experiences of remembering.

Figure 50: *Untitled*, 2012, wax

Figure 51: *Untitled*, 2012, wax

The transformation of liquid wax moulding the soft fabric of the latex into something solid also created a highly brittle, sensitive form. Even though each piece had been made from three or four thinly layered wax coatings, in certain areas the membrane was so fine it appeared like tissue paper. The transitional nature of wax can also be evocative of things moving from one state to another, from liquid to solid and from stable to ephemeral.

Figure 52: *Wax Drawings*, 2012, wax, photocopy

From my experiments it was evident that one process was informing the other, and I worked at adapting and refining those processes most relevant to the project's aims. My exploration with wax was no exception and because the results were promising I experimented further, making photocopies of the wax/latex moulds. In the act of photocopying – I had to leave the lid up because of the fragile forms – external light was incorporated into the resulting image.

Experimentation also included lightly sanding the surface of the paper, which broke the image down and gave the paper the appearance of frayed cloth. Removing information from the image was another method of distancing the original source and again put the emphasis on shape. Each of the effects, of partial erasure and disrupted surface, were a means to enriching the drawings and their ephemerality.

A fortuitous discovery came when I accidently melted wax on both sides of a piece of paper and found that wax altered the opacity of the paper, making it translucent or semi-transparent (see Figure 52).

Figure 53: *Untitled*, 2012, wax, photocopy

Figure 54: *Untitled*, 2012, wax, photocopy

The waxy skin that covered the paper's surface, and hence the drawing, gave a physical presence to the works, fixing the progressively disintegrating forms in a more permanent way. However, the thin wax coating was susceptible to cracking – in some areas there were very fine wax fissures running across the faces of the images – which countered this sense of permanence. The works took on a quality of glass, a thin sheet that transposed the drawings into more precious illuminated objects

Additionally, the waxy gossamer film and incidental wax drips distorted the vision of the forms, making their impression vague and their shapes more indistinct. Acting like a filter, the superficial coating of wax forces the eye to penetrate its layers in the attempt to recognise the saturated image (see Figures 53 and 54).

The fusion between the wax and the fine paper invites multiple readings – heightening the sense of the works' fragility but also making images appear like vaporous forms of the objects as details drift, dissolve and disappear behind the wax frames. I also explored using brighter colours within these works. Unlike the monochromatic photo-drawings that looked like relics, colour appeared to imbue these semi-diaphanous forms with a sense of life.

Figure 55: *Wax Drawings*, 2012, wax, photocopy

Barely perceptible, the subtle outlines and coloured wax drawings recall the emerging *memory-image* as defined by Henri Bergson.[98] The semi-transparent nature of the paper enabled other textures to be seen from behind as soft, blurred impressions, effectively creating a zone of indeterminate quality, contributing to the work's depth. The back and forth viewing between the two-dimensional form and the three-dimensional reality within the picture draws the eye deep into the composition. It seems to speak of the phenomenal richness of how we live both within our memories and within the surrounding experiential world that gives our life fuller meaning.

The outcomes for both the wax impressions and the wax drawings reveal how materials of a sensitive nature are vulnerable to being transformed. Each of the works reinforces the sense of uniqueness and delicacy inherent in the latex pieces from which they were cast. The works also reveal the changes in reading that occur through the many stages of reworking an image. Both the latex pieces and the original objects were crucial in providing a physical presence to each series of works, but in a very different and expansive way.

[98] Bergson, H. 1911, *Matter and Memory,* fourth edition (1994), translated by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York, p.134

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

In this Research Masters project I have set out to explore relationships between drawing, objects and memory. My intention throughout the research was to create a series of visual works that evoke complex states of memory such as vulnerability, ambiguity and ephemerality. The individual research works explored concepts of transformation and conveyed notions of loss and persistence.

By drawing and taking casts of aged domestic objects, I reinterpreted their material and formal qualities in order to bring focus to memory and our relationship with the past. I also explored two- and three-dimension shapes and the relationships between drawing and sculpture in order to express how memory redefines three-dimensional reality into new surfaces of visual, sensory and emotive experiences.

Throughout this process-based enquiry I have also emphasised the physical processes of drawing and casting in order to reflect the fluctuating experience of memory. Through the development of the works, these ideas echoed the processes by which memories are created and recreated. The investigation sought to capture, lose and recapture essences of the works' subjects, in the same way that our memories retain, shift, lose, recapture and transform our impressions of past experiences, ultimately creating different tangible realities.

The focus on the capacity of disparate and yielding materials, such as latex, wax and tarlatan, to suggest the fragile state of our memories also refers to the vulnerable materiality of the objects used. I also explored the use of subtle and monochromatic colours to reflect memory's distanced clarity and its emotive qualities. The tactile and sensual materials were selected to emphasise the connections between materiality and the sensate awareness of our memories, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories on embodied consciousness and touch as a sensory surface were influential to this exploration.

Throughout this enquiry the relationships between drawing and casting, with fluid and porous materials, were explored in order to create new forms of objects that could retain an imprint of the originals. The capturing of objects' imprints sustains the former experiences by preserving them within the new form. The recurring remnant becomes a visible and sensory means of triggering personal memories and developing new imagery, meanings and experiences of an object.

The findings from the process of developing the works were supportive of theories of memory proposed by Paul Ricoeur, Henri Bergson and Edward Casey. Each of these authors explored how the past can be overlooked or underdeveloped within memory even though a remnant trace survives. The recurring imprints of objects within works also propose that, like our fallible memory, it remains in a constant state of transition and evolution.

My explorations with wax proved to be valuable for revealing and maintaining traces of objects. The *Wax Impressions* series explored how intricate patterns of colour and texture lifted from objects impacted the surfaces of the new wax forms and were preserved within a new materiality. I also explored how the delicate and brittle nature of wax can be used to create fragile forms.

The *Light Traces* series extended the concept of enduring elements, explored through the application of photocopying as a process of reducing and reworking an object's form. Various processes transformed objects from three to two dimensions. The round and square shapes of the original objects continued to reveal themselves within the drawings, and the three-dimensional folds of the latex pieces emerged as a linear drawing of flat planes. The processes of casting the objects with latex and then photocopying the latex pieces generated new readings of the objects while still referring to their origin. The reworking of the objects is indicative of the manner in which our memories can create new realities and meanings from former experiences.

The relationship between drawing and sculpture was fundamental to the project. Throughout my investigation I explored the boundaries between the disciplines and endeavoured to blur the lines between two and three dimensions. Shifting between drawing and sculpture revealed methods for developing techniques that were critical in formulating new experiences of the objects.

The relationship between the contrasting disciplines and their media was examined by the process of coating sculptural latex pieces with graphite powder. This produced delicate tonal variations that emphasised form. Explorative work with wax in the series *Wax Drawings* transformed the quality of the kozo paper to make it semi-transparent. Another exciting discovery was how, in *The Wardrobe* series, the technique of casting transformed the initial coverage of graphite applied to the wardrobe and became the delicate inside surface of the wardrobe's new fabric form. The graphite's slippery quality also acted as an enabler to casting and removing the fabric from the wardrobe. The development of these works broadened my perspective of the capacity of drawing and sculpture to create new forms and meanings.

The different methods and various materials informed each series of works and allowed the conceptual nature of the project to develop. The early series *Rubbing Drawings* and the

development of organic convex/concave shapes informed my explorations with liquid latex. The yielding quality of the latex was ideal for casting objects to create the soft and flexible *Latex Forms* series. The fine texture of the latex could be manipulated, scored and ruptured, enabling the pieces to become fragile and to collapse. I align this fragility to the ephemerality of experience and memory. Notions of time passing were implied by the slow processes of building delicate layers of thin latex washes. The fragmentation of the latex pieces also spoke of memory's fragmentation.

The exploration of latex by the artist Eva Hesse to create forms of partial appearances, to express open-ended meanings, was a valuable resource for my investigation. Also integral to the project were the ideas of Michael Leyton, who proposed that physical shapes evidence former experiences through recognisable asymmetrical changes. This idea was reflected in the fragmentation of the latex pieces, which disturbed their formal and material reality and suggested transformative processes.

The Wardrobe series informed the project through the development of ideas connected with transformation, loss and ambiguity. Directed by the outcomes of the latex pieces, which represented solid objects as softer forms, I cast the wardrobe's interior and exterior surfaces using latex and tarlatan. The technique of casting the wardrobe was a transformative process suggestive of organic life cycles that create new realities. The collapsed appearances of the two new wardrobe pieces speaks of the loss of their structure and implies the duality of the object's presence and absence. The visibility of seams, tears and material joins within each piece were signs of forming processes and other transient states that reflect in the same way as our memories do to create ephemerality.

I also discovered that the familiar shape of the wardrobe and its association with daily routine and the storage of clothing was emphasised by the use of tarlatan. The artist Louise Bourgeois used fabric as an expression of memory and was inspirational to my investigation of material's potency within this work.

By casting the wardrobe's interior with latex I endeavoured to evoke its atmospheric quality. The interior of a wardrobe is a private space for the gathering and storing of personal items. I viewed this as a metaphor for our inner self and how our memory is constantly collecting and shifting a lifetime of lived experiences. The formal qualities of the wardrobe's interior, which included shape, surface and the graphite markings I had applied earlier, were captured by the sensitive latex material, resulting in a soft and tactile form. The flexibility of the latex piece embodies the transient, adaptable nature of our memories, and refers to the ambiguous nature of memory states. The impermanency of the latex material created a wardrobe form of fleeting temporality.

Gaston Bachelard was influential throughout the project, and I was to become convinced through my research with the wardrobe of the validity of his ideas on the capacity of objects to embody emotional experiences.

Working with drawing and three-dimensional objects throughout the project, I have attempted to express the relationship between matter and memory. The resulting artworks are a reflection of the fragility of our lived experiences and the capacity of our memories to be reinterpreted and transformed.

The project has been consistently influenced by Edward Casey's notion that in the "action of uncovering the past … we regain the past as different each time. Or, more exactly, we regain it as different in its very sameness."[99] I explored Casey's idea that the past endures within new experiences via the various processes I employed to capture something new and different from the original object.

The sustained nature of the Masters program and the research undertaken has enabled me to develop knowledge that will continue to have a significant impact on my drawing practice. The skills I have learnt in casting and working between two and three dimensions have equipped me to continue exploring ambitious installation projects that bring drawing and sculptural forms together, and to continue to work with large-scale objects. This research also showed me the value of mixing delicate drawing materials with sculptural mediums in terms of creating fragile forms. I also developed an understanding of the relationships between drawing and sculpture to create works of a fragmentary nature and show their connection to create forms evocative of lived experiences through emphasis on flexible shapes and soft surfaces. Finding alternate processes for drawing and developing strategies for creating that I have explored through the project express the richness and diverse nature of the discipline of drawing to transform the everyday domestic object and traditional drawing language into new art forms.

[99] Casey, E.S. 1987 and 2000, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, p.286

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Appendix